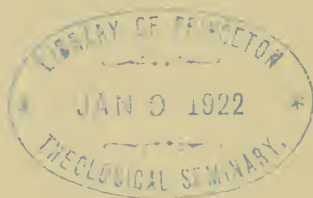


# INFANT BAPTISM

W. J. MCROTHER





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Infant-baptism





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THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

# Infant-Baptism

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HISTORICALLY CONSIDERED

Die Wahrheit ist untödtlich

—Hübmeier

(The truth is immortal)

✓  
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Nashville, Tennessee

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To  
the Memory of the faithful Witnesses  
who have  
lived and labored and suffered  
for the  
establishment of spiritual religion  
in the earth  
this volume is reverently  
dedicated.

## PREFACE.

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THE following pages have been written in the interest of spiritual religion and the evangelical faith. Years spent in the study and teaching of church history have forced the conviction that infant-baptism, taken as a whole and throughout its history, has been the most serious departure from apostolic Christianity and evangelical faith that the world has to show. It has been the open door through which most of the errors and evils which have afflicted the kingdom of Christ on earth have poured in. The whole character of Christian history would certainly have been very different had faith-baptism been preserved inviolate. Sacramental salvation, compulsion of conscience, bloody persecution and union of Church and State, would have been impossible. Its abandonment today would abolish sacramental salvation with all the churches that support this faith, would give an immeasurable impulse to evangelical faith and do more to unite the Christians of the world in the bonds of genuine spiritual fellowship and fraternity than all other possible changes. Varying views of the significance of infant-baptism is the chief cause of division among the pedobaptists themselves; its practice is the chief barrier between Baptists and evangelical pedobaptists.

The work has been written with the full consciousness that there is much difference between the conceptions of infant-baptism as held and practiced by Catholics and evangelical Protestants, but with a very firm conviction of the evils and dangers as practiced among the latter. The author cherishes nothing but kindly feelings for his pedobaptist brethren and has sought to avoid in these pages any expression that would wound or offend reasonable people. He has written as plainly and as forcibly as his powers would permit, with the hope that pedobaptists may understand the feelings of the Baptists more fully and that some pedobaptists may be led to consider afresh their own duty in the premises. Withal, it may lead some Baptists to understand more fully the security and importance of their own position and the seriousness of the dangers that lurk in infant-baptism.

W. J. M.

Louisville, Ky., Christmas, 1915.



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## INTRODUCTION.

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THERE have been, among others, two marked tendencies in the history of Christianity which have been productive of evil. One has been the tendency to overestimate the ceremonial elements, and the other to underestimate them. Because of their strenuous adherence to immersion as the form prescribed in the New Testament for the ordinance of baptism, Baptists have often been misunderstood as champions of the ceremonial as contrasted with the spiritual elements of the gospel. Nothing could be farther from the truth than this estimate of Baptists. They have indeed expended much effort in maintaining the two ordinances of the New Testament church. But their aim has been always to preserve the spirituality of the gospel, not to lose sight of it in the advocacy of forms and ceremonies. The amount of time and thought expended upon the latter has been no greater than the tendency to overestimate them or pervert their meaning on the part of others.

Baptists have, indeed, in a very peculiar sense, felt themselves called to maintain the purity and spirituality of the New Testament Christianity. Their sense of the call to this work has been manifest in nothing more clearly than in their effort to define the ceremonial elements of Christianity in relation to the spiritual. Human nature is almost incorrigibly devoted to the outward aspects of religion until it has become sufficiently spiritualized to penetrate to the heart and grasp the central realities. One needs only to recall the Roman Catholic perversion of a simple metaphor of Jesus into the doctrine of the "real presence." It would seem that an elementary knowledge of the principles of rhetoric would have prevented so palpable an error of interpretation. But unspiritual human nature seized

upon the literal meaning and converted it into a stupendous and far-reaching perversion of the fundamentals of the gospel. It became thus a striking example of the perils which arise out of apparently small deviations from a spiritual faith.

It is in view of facts of this kind that Baptists have been the religious radicals among the various denominations. They have seen with great vividness and clearness of outline the central spiritual elements of Christianity. With a like vividness and clearness they have perceived the significance of the outward forms. For them it has seemed as if the very life of Christianity depended upon keeping the spiritual and ceremonial elements in their respective places. Christian history certainly justifies them in their view. Forms and ceremonies are like ladders. On them we may climb up or down. If we keep them in their places as symbols, the soul feeds on the truth symbolized. If we convert them into sacraments, the soul misses the central vitality itself, spiritual communion with God. An outward religious ceremony derives its chief significance from the context in which it is placed, from the general system of which it forms a part. If a ceremony is set in the context of a spiritual system of truths, it may become an indispensable element for the furtherance of those truths. If it is set in the context of a sacramental system, it may and does become a means for obscuring the truth and enslaving the soul. It is this perception of the value of ceremonies as symbols and of their perils as sacraments which animates Baptists in their strenuous advocacy of a spiritual interpretation of the ordinances of Christianity. The practice of infant baptism has been one of the greatest evils which has arisen in the history of Christianity in the Baptist view. It is not forgotten that in the United States there has been

some modification in the estimate of the ordinance as practiced by some of the pedobaptist denominations. But in principle infant baptism remains where it has been from the beginning, an excrescence and alien element in the body of general Protestant doctrine. Fortunately, these great denominations often possess other elements which are spiritual and inconsistent with the practice of infant baptism. This makes it seem to a Baptist incredible that infant baptism should be retained by them as in any sense an element of New Testament Christianity.

In the light of the preceding statements it will not be difficult for a fair-minded pedobaptist to understand the motive of a Baptist in maintaining believers' and opposing infant baptism. It is not as the champion of a form or ceremony merely, it is not as a formalist at all, that he pleads. It is rather as the advocate of an intensely and radically spiritual Christianity, which seeks to reproduce that of the New Testament.

Professor McGlothlin has traced the development of infant baptism throughout Christian history with great clearness in the pages of this volume. Perhaps no better argument can be offered against the practice than that afforded by the facts of its origin, and the motives which led to its perpetuation. Certainly no pen can adequately describe the evils to which it has given rise in those countries where the logic of infant baptism has had an opportunity to work itself out fully in church life. The fundamental explanation is to be found at every stage in the history. Infant baptism shifts the center of gravity of Christianity so completely that a thorough transformation of church life follows. The direct gives place to an indirect relation of the soul to God; personal faith gives place to proxy profession; the vital inward change or new birth gives place to a fictitious sacramental salvation; a regenerate gives place to an unregenerate church membership. This is the logic of infant baptism, and it is universal experience as well, except where other and opposing principles neutralize the tendency.

E. Y. MULLINS.

## CHAPTER I.

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### INFANT-BAPTISM IN THE WORLD.

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INFANT-BAPTISM is one of the most tenderly cherished and widely practiced of all ecclesiastical ceremonies. Of the more than five hundred millions of nominal Christian population of the world the vast majority administer this rite, while a comparatively small minority actually oppose infant-baptism and insist on the practice of faith-baptism only. The two great Catholic churches are unanimous in its support, and the great majority of Protestant churches officially favor it, though some of them insist on its practice less strenuously than the Catholics. Millions rely upon it for regeneration and life eternal. Some parents look upon the death of an unbaptized child with terror, feeling certain that the little one will be banished from the face of God forever. The baptism of royal infants is a court function of the highest importance, while in the home of the peasant it is an event of the greatest moment. Ecclesiastics and parents alike unite in demanding the baptism of the infant, to assure the little one's eternal welfare and gain ecclesiastical control over the life at its beginning,

Often the State has demanded the administration of infant-baptism as sternly as the Church,

and in some lands the want of baptism is still a serious disability in the civil life of the citizen. During the later Middle Ages infant-baptism was almost triumphant, and its advocates were engaged in a bloody effort to suppress by force all who opposed. It was not effectively challenged till the period of the Reformation, and the marked growth of faith-baptism did not begin till the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Even now great numbers of pedobaptists regard anti-pedobaptists as a body of ignorant, narrow, perverted and troublesome fanatics who do not care for the religious welfare of their children and who are in fact semi-heathen; others feel that anti-pedobaptists make overmuch trouble about a ceremony that is at least harmless and beautiful; still others feel that anti-pedobaptists deny to their children a right which was granted to them by the Saviour himself and which has been practiced ever since.

And yet pedobaptist and anti-pedobaptist scholars are agreed almost absolutely as to the ascertainable facts connected with the history of infant-baptism. Briefly stated, these facts are as follows: The Scriptures are silent concerning infant-baptism; Jesus did not baptize any one (John 4: 2), and all the recorded cases of baptism are baptisms of believers; there is no express command to baptize any but believers; if infant-baptism is to be found in the Scriptures it is wholly by inference; there is no conclusive proof of the existence of the practice of infant-baptism for

more than a century and a half after the death of Jesus. The earliest clear evidence of the practice is found in Tertullian, who lived at Carthage in North Africa, at the end of the second century; he opposed the practice; the next evidence is found in Cyprian, the bishop of this same city of Carthage, about 250. Origen, a great scholar of Egypt, also in North Africa, probably shows acquaintance with and approval of it about the same time; it next appears at Constantinople in the following century, but is opposed by the great preacher and bishop of that city, Gregory Nazianzen; from this time on it gradually spreads over the Christian world. Augustine, bishop of Hippo, in North Africa, in the fifth century, developed the theological argument for the practice, basing it in the regenerating power of baptism operating on the depraved nature of the infant child; on this basis it rapidly spread throughout the world; civil governments began in the early Middle Ages to support the Church with force in the demand that all children should be baptized; some of the sects of the later Middle Ages opposed infant-baptism but were hunted to death as heretics; most of the Reformers preserved infant-baptism, but a strong contingency, known as Anabaptists, began a powerful agitation for its abolition. Since that time infant-baptism has relatively declined, while faith-baptism has had a great revival. These tendencies were greatly accelerated in the nineteenth century, and now show no symptoms of abatement.



These are the ascertainable facts concerning which there is little difference of opinion among scholars of all communions. The differences lie beyond the ascertainable facts in the realm of inference. Anti-pedobaptists maintain that these facts are full and final, that they constitute an overwhelming argument against infant-baptism and in favor of faith-baptism. Pedobaptists claim that infant-baptism can be legitimately inferred and satisfactorily supported by these facts. The two great parties separate in the realm of inference, not of fact.

In the view of anti-pedobaptists, infant-baptism is not only without scriptural warrant, but is also positively and seriously injurious when viewed in the whole range of its work. Pedobaptists while differing widely, even fundamentally, among themselves as to what baptism actually accomplishes in or for the infant, are agreed that it brings some blessing. And yet they would scarcely claim that their children show by the pragmatic test of actual later life any higher moral standards, and purer faith, clearer hope, greater zeal or more earnest piety than the children of pious and cultured anti-pedobaptists. The supposedly beneficial effects of baptism, when tested by actual experience, are seen to be wholly in the realm of conjecture. They cannot be set down as facts. The known facts are as stated above.

Anti-pedobaptists believe that infant-baptism is not only totally devoid of warrant in Scripture in the way of either precept or example, but that



it also violates the fundamental conception of religion set forth in the New Testament; and introduces a second baptism, which works to abolish faith-baptism which is commanded in the Scriptures. In its essential nature, it nullifies the fundamental Christian principles of personal choice and conscious religious experience; it violates in the cradle of helpless infancy the sacred doctrine of religious freedom; historically and in practice it has obscured the great fact of spiritual regeneration through faith in Jesus Christ, it has introduced the unregenerate world into the Church, has blurred and confused the distinction between Christian and non-Christian; has led millions to depend on its magical effects for a salvation that is promised to vital faith in Christ only; has served as the basis for the union of Church and State, and has been the indispensable condition of religious coercion and persecution through the centuries. Without the forcible administration of baptism on unconscious or unwilling individuals persecution is logically impossible, since the very essence of faith-baptism is the personal and free choice of each individual on all religious matters. Upon infant-baptism, therefore, lies first responsibility for all the blood that has been poured out by the Church in the effort to enforce ecclesiastical uniformity. No body of Christian people who have consistently practiced faith-baptism have been guilty of persecution. Further than this, a moment's consideration will make it perfectly clear to any thoughtful man that those who

practice faith-baptism could not become persecutors, for the simple reason that they have adopted the voluntary principle in religion.

No indictment of equal gravity can be brought against any other ceremony practiced by any considerable part of the Christian world today. Not only the two great Catholic churches, but also every other pedobaptist church, with one or two minor exceptions, carries the blood of martyrs on its skirts as a result of the effort to coerce men into uniformity through infant-baptism.

In view of these undeniable facts it seems to anti-pedobaptists passing strange that the evangelical Protestant churches who now abhor persecution, and insist on religious freedom and a personal religious experience as a condition of church membership, should still persist in a practice whose history is so dark and whose effects even now are so dangerous, a practice which is confessedly without clear Scripture warrant, which is Jewish and pagan in its original and fundamental conception, which has been condemned by its practical effects in Christian history, which tends inevitably to nullify the spiritual nature of Christianity itself, and is today the rock upon which Catholicism, both Roman and Greek, stands.

The practice persists chiefly because of the power of ecclesiastical tradition. It arose out of belief in the magical effects of baptism, and is defended by arguments that differ according to the fundamental standpoints of the churches

that maintain it. These arguments of the various pedobaptist churches often invalidate and negative each other, but without any effect on their respective proponents. The Calvinist repudiates the grounds on which the Catholic baptizes infants, and *vice versa*. The effort to make a valid scriptural argument by adducing cases of infant-baptism or discovering something that could be construed into a command to baptize infants is an afterthought. No such efforts were made in the early history of the practice. It was not till Protestants arose and adopted the theory of the supreme authority of Scripture that such arguments were attempted. In modern times infant-baptism, whatever arguments are advanced in its support in controversy with the advocates of faith-baptism, really rests on one of the three following basal principles: The Catholics (Roman and Greek) and many Lutherans and Episcopalians base it on the magical regenerating power of the ceremony; Presbyterians, Congregationalists and some others on the relation of the child to believing parents; Methodists and some others make it a simple ceremony of dedication by which the child is publicly and solemnly given to God. In the first instance the child is held to be lost without baptism and is believed to be saved in it and by it; in the second instance the child is not supposed to be saved by it, but since it is born of believing parents (only the children of believing parents are baptized), it has a right to baptism as the ceremony which intro-

duces it into the covenant of grace, as circumcision did in the Jewish economy. Without this infant-baptism they believe the child would somehow be at a serious disadvantage. In the third case baptism is not for the direct benefit of the child at all, but for the sake of the parents, who are thus reminded of their solemn duty to bring up the child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Doubtless most parents, except in the Catholic churches, are moved by parental sentiment without any clear thought as to the purpose or significance of baptism. They accept it as an ancient and pretty social and religious custom whose omission would be nothing short of a social disgrace.

All the pedobaptist churches baptize adults also, but on totally different grounds. They are agreed that an adult must repent and believe, else baptism is an idle and useless ceremony. They thus have two baptisms; one is for infants; it is without faith and is dependent for its efficacy and significance either on the magical working of baptism or on the natural family relation of the infant to believing parents, or on the subsequent religious instruction given by parents. The other is for adults, and is based upon preceding faith.

The justification of infant-baptism is extremely difficult and embarrassing to all except those who believe in its regenerating power. It grew up in the Catholic system and has always been very embarrassing to evangelical pedobaptists. Clear thinkers, like Zwingli and Calvin, are utterly con-

fused when they try to find a place for it in their systems. Nothing but the power of ecclesiastical tradition could keep evangelical pedobaptists practicing a custom which is the contradiction of their evangelical principles. In view of these facts it is not strange that the practice is on the decline among evangelical Christians.

## CHAPTER II.

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### THE BAPTIST VIEW OF BAPTISM.

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BAPTISTS hold a perfectly simple and consistent view of baptism. They have but one baptism for all, based upon the spiritual condition of the recipient. They do not baptize one class for one reason and another for another. They have "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." What they insist on with unwavering fidelity is that repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ must precede baptism in every instance. It is not a question of infants or adults, not a question of age in any sense, but of faith. If infants could exercise faith Baptists would baptize every one that gave satisfactory evidence of the possession of that faith and expressed a desire for baptism. When there is a request for baptism and satisfactory evidence of the existence of faith is found, Baptists baptize, whether the candidate is eight, or twelve, or twenty, or seventy. Age, it is repeated, has no place in the discussion. Ours is not an adult- as contrasted with a child-baptism, but a faith-baptism as contrasted with a non-faith-baptism. Baptists believe that all persons who die without attaining moral responsibility, whatever be the cause, are saved by the mercy and grace of God in Christ Jesus. But this salvation

is without the exercise of faith and so without the duty of baptism. Baptists would no more baptize an idiot than an infant, because neither is capable of exercising faith. They believe baptism to be absolutely inseparable from the exercise of personal saving faith.

The reasons which actuate the Baptists in these views and practices are many and various. The scriptural argument will be reviewed at some length in the next two chapters. In this the more general phases of the argument will be stated.

1. Baptists believe that the essential nature of the Christian religion makes any other than the view set forth above untenable and any other practice than theirs ultimately if not immediately hurtful. Salvation is, as they believe, personal. There are no proxies, one cannot stand for another in spiritual things. Every soul must for itself enter into right relations with God through Jesus Christ. The soul must be free, in full possession of its faculties, its actions voluntary. Infant-baptism is a process of spiritual kidnaping. It not only has no blessings for the child, but violates the fundamental religious rights of the individual, deciding for him when he is helpless what he has a God-given right and duty to decide for himself. It is not only futile, but denies to its victim the highest functions of a spiritual being, the right of self-direction in the supreme concerns of the soul. As well baptize an adult in the unconsciousness of sleep or anesthesia or delirium as an infant in its moral and religious un-



consciousness. Infant-baptism is the first and fundamental violation of religious freedom and draws all other violations in its train.

Baptists do not believe that religion in its essence is an affair of the family or the nation or of racial descent. They recognize that the pagan religions were and are tribal, national, or racial. A pagan is born into a religion as he is born into citizenship in a given state. In some measure the Jewish religion stood on the same basis. The Jewish child was born into the Jewish religion, and he was circumcised in acknowledgment and confirmation of that fact. His was a national religion. His circumcision and religious duties were based on his birth, his racial and physical origin. It neither marked nor wrought any change in his spiritual condition; in fact, it had no relation to his personal character or spiritual condition as an individual. To omit it was to renounce loyalty to Israel; it involved expulsion from the nation and so from its spiritual as well as its other advantages.

But in the fullness of the times this ideal had served its purposes in the progress of the kingdom of God, and the day arrived for the blessings of grace to be sent broadcast throughout the earth. In order to accomplish this high purpose change was necessary. John the Baptist was raised up as a "teacher sent from God" to institute this change. He broke away from the racial conception of religion altogether, and made the personal experience of repentance and faith in



every individual of whatever race or family the basis of religion. The ax was laid at the root of *every* tree (Jewish as well as Gentile), and *every* tree (Jewish as well as Gentile) that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. The basis of religion in the mouth of John is personal. In order to enter the kingdom of God the Jew as well as the Gentile must repent and believe and so the Jew as well as the Gentile must be baptized. Circumcision was for the *Jewish male child*, baptism was for the *repentant and believing human being* (Jew and Gentile alike). The two ceremonies stood on totally different bases, meant totally different things, and so had no relation of kinship to each other. Jews who had been circumcised in infancy were baptized notwithstanding their circumcision. Circumcision rested upon the rights and duties of Jewish citizenship, a racial basis, and so was to be administered to every male Jewish child; baptism rests upon a personal, spiritual basis (repentance and faith) and so is to be administered to every individual (male or female) who possesses the necessary spiritual qualifications, irrespective of sex, race, or family. Circumcision by its nature and purpose was limited to Jewish male children, baptism is limited by its nature to believers. Genuine baptism before faith is as impossible as circumcision before birth.

Baptists do not fail to value Christian parentage or emphasize parental obligation to bring up children in the nurture and admonition of the

Lord. But they cannot believe that the child inherits the Christianity of its parents or loses any spiritual blessings by the omission of a ceremony that is supposed to have taken the place of the old Jewish circumcision. To Baptists the Christian religion is by its very nature personal and spiritual. In their opinion there can be no religion by proxy or family or ceremony. A child can no more inherit its parents' faith than their view of the solar system. Salvation lies in the realm of personal experience where there are no proxies before birth or after birth, and as every individual must consciously believe for himself so he must consciously choose baptism for himself.

2. Baptists reject infant-baptism because they believe our religion is *spiritual*. The high and holy transactions between the soul and God take place in the clear light of consciousness. They do not believe that the ceremony of baptism can work in a magical way to produce in the soul, while it is morally unconscious, such tremendous effects as regeneration and salvation. To Baptists the practice of baptizing babies for the removal of sin of which they are not conscious is blasphemous mockery, working immeasurable wrong to the soul by lulling it into a false and dangerous security when it comes to conscious responsibility. The view that baptism regenerates is pagan in its origin and came directly from paganism into Christianity. It was, except among Pelagians, the only view of infant-baptism held

by anybody down to the Reformation, and is still the view and teaching of the vast majority of those who practice it. It is, in the judgment of Baptists, the deadliest heresy that ever crept out of the pagan religions of the Roman empire into the faith of the Christian Church. If evangelical Protestants sometimes wonder at the tenacity of the Baptists in their opposition to infant-baptism they can easily find the explanation in the history and present practice of the ceremony. It is a constant cause of wonder to Baptists that evangelical Protestants so tenaciously perpetuate a practice for which they can find no certain Scripture warrant, a practice which is the very cornerstone of the Catholic churches, which is relied on by hundreds of millions of souls in our day for a salvation which no evangelical Christian believes it can give them and which had such a sinister and bloody history in the Middle Ages. Baptists cannot look upon this practice without a shudder. They believe our religion is spiritual and therefore they reject infant-baptism, which they believe has been the chief hindrance to evangelical Christianity in its whole history. It is in the interest of spiritual freedom and reality that they protest. It is not from love of controversy or isolation, but from a profound conviction that the most precious treasures are at stake.

3. Baptists do not believe that baptism, which has a distinct and important place in the kingdom of God, should be emptied of its real meaning by reducing it to a ceremony of infant dedication.

They believe that all parents should in their hearts dedicate their children to God and do their utmost to rear them in the fear of the Lord. Nor do they have any objection to a public dedication to God, if parents so desire. What they object to is the prostitution of baptism to this use. Baptism was instituted as a ceremony of *self*-dedication to Jesus Christ and a public, dramatic proclamation of personal repentance and faith in him. It is needed for this purpose at the beginning of the Christian life, and it is a serious perversion of the ordinance and a serious loss to the Christian life to use it for the public dedication of infants, thereby preventing its use for the purpose for which the Founder instituted it. Pedobaptists have no ceremony of self-dedication at the beginning of the real Christian life—a great loss.

4. Baptists reject infant-baptism because they believe it to be entirely without warrant in Scripture. Confessedly there is no explicit command to baptize infants or any others than believers. Nor is there any example of infant-baptism. It is not specifically forbidden in Scripture, it is true, but Baptists believe it to be excluded by the terms of the Great Commission under which Christian work is done. They believe it is not forbidden because the practice had not arisen, and did not, therefore, come into the purview of the Christians of the first century. Complete silence concerning a custom which differs so radically from faith-baptism, which was commanded, is a power-

ful presupposition against the existence of the practice. To argue that a practice is permitted and approved when it is not forbidden would open the door to all the other Catholic innovations of the centuries, such as the mass, veneration of saints, relics and images, transubstantiation and the rest, none of which are forbidden in Scripture. This argument proves too much, and therefore proves nothing. The fact that a practice is not forbidden in Scripture is not a proof that it is approved.

5. In the next place, Baptists reject infant-baptism because they can trace its rise in Christian history subsequent to the Apostolic Age. They know that it comes out of the years when the fundamentals of Christianity were being obscured and obliterated by the absorption into the Church of pre-Christian Jewish and pagan ideas and practices. First came baptismal remission and regeneration, the saving significance of the ordinance, and out of this corruption naturally arose the practice of baptizing the sick and the dying, who were believed to be lost if they died unbaptized. Very naturally the supposed benefits of baptism were extended to sick infants and then gradually to all infants.

It originated in those years in which the old paganism and Christianity were being amalgamated into what is called the Catholic church, and the history of the period does not recommend the practice. It rose in the making of the Catholic system and it fits there perfectly; but it is

an anomaly in any evangelical system built on justification by faith. It is a grief to Baptists that their Protestant brethren have retained this unevangelical Catholic practice which is so utterly alien to their own faith, which drives them to such strange expedients in its defense, which constantly jeopardizes their own evangelical position and which has drawn in its train through the centuries such a mass of evils.

6. Baptists reject infant-baptism because of its baleful effects in Christian history. Hardly any other departure from Scripture teaching has been so prolific of evil. It was the open door through which the unregenerate world flooded into the Church and finally overwhelmed it. The whole of society poured into the Church through this door, all distinction between the Church and the world disappeared, the ideal of a pure church vanished, church discipline ceased; henceforth the world and the Church were identical. Without infant-baptism there never would have been a Catholic church and the whole history of the Christian world would have been different. Baptists believe that these indisputable historical effects constitute a sound reason for rejecting the practice.

7. Finally, Baptists claim that the very ritual of baptism used by many of the pedobaptist churches themselves proves that faith was required in the earliest times. The oldest of these rituals are very ancient and they presuppose faith. The priest is still required to ask the child if it

repents, believes, renounces the world, etc. The sponsors answer for the child, in the name of the child. It is all absurd, ridiculous, dishonest. It proves absolutely that the early churches required faith.

Coupled with this was the institution of the catechumenate in which candidates were carefully trained before they received baptism. This was not applied to heathen and their children only, but also to the children of Christian parents.

All these considerations lead Baptists not only to regard infant-baptism as without warrant, but also to feel that it is positively wrong. It is with profound regret that they see their evangelical pedobaptist brethren perpetuating a practice which they inherited from Catholicism, which has been so hurtful in the past and which is so dangerous to spiritual, evangelical Christianity for the future.



## CHAPTER III.

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### INFANT-BAPTISM AND THE SCRIPTURES.

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BAPTISM is a Christian ordinance. It is not mentioned in the Old Testament, but first appears in the ministry of John the Baptist. It is introduced without any explanation of its origin or significance. John mentions the fact that he was sent to baptize by God the Father himself (John 1: 33, 31). His was a "baptism of repentance," that is, it was based upon repentance which it presupposed (Mark 1: 4; Luke 3: 3; Acts 13: 24). This fact excludes a non-faith infant-baptism in his practice, and so far as known no one claims that John baptized infants. He preached powerfully and pungently and baptized those who repented.

Jesus began his public ministry by asking baptism at the hands of John, thus aligning himself with John's movement. When John hesitated and demurred, he insisted, declaring that "thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3: 15). After his baptism and temptation he also began preaching and gathering disciples around himself. His message at the beginning was identical with that of John; he, too, proclaimed the demand, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven



is at hand." Jesus, through his baptism, as well as through his early messages and first followers, allied himself directly with John and his movement. His work was a continuation of that of John, his earliest disciples had been disciples of John (John 1: 35ff; 3: 26). They continued to baptize after they transferred their allegiance to Jesus, and there is no evidence of any change of the subject of baptism from a penitent believer to an unconscious infant either then or later (John 3: 22f).

Nothing more is said in the gospel narrative about baptisms by Jesus or his disciples after the early weeks of his ministry. Because of this silence in the record some commentators have thought that he suspended baptisms altogether after a while to give himself wholly to the spiritual work of the kingdom. This does not seem probable, however, since he later commends the baptism of John (Matt. 21: 25; Mark 11: 30; Luke 20: 4; 7: 28f), and uses the figure of baptism in the description of his approaching sufferings (Matt. 20: 22f; Mark 10: 38f). He would hardly have done this unless the practice of baptism had been continued throughout his ministry so as to be familiar to his hearers. The probability is that there were very few conversions after the period of hostility began, and so naturally few baptisms. There is, however, it must be admitted, no command to baptize until after his resurrection, nor any example of his baptizing, except at the beginning of his ministry.

Did he baptize little children in the middle of that ministry? It is not probable that he did. He loved little children, used them in illustrating profound and important truths (Mark 9: 36f; Luke 9: 47; Matt 18: 2, 4f; Mark 10: 15; Luke 18: 17; 7: 32); he insisted on their having free access to him and his teaching, declaring that the kingdom with all its riches belonged to them as well as to others (Matt. 19: 14; Mark 10: 14); he took them in his arms and blessed them. But did he baptize them? "Jesus himself baptized not" (John 4: 2). If these children were baptized it must have been done by his disciples. But they sought to hinder them from coming to him and the spirit which they manifested is not such as to lead us to believe that they were accustomed to baptize children or expected him to do so on this occasion. If they had been instructed by Jesus to baptize children it is inconceivable that they would have behaved so roughly as to call forth a sharp rebuke from the Master. If Jesus himself baptized them he changed his earlier custom of baptizing only through his disciples, and changed also from the earlier practice of both John and himself, for both had required repentance as a prerequisite to baptism. If such radical changes had been made at this time it seems certain that something would have been said in the narrative to indicate that fact, whereas there is absolute silence concerning baptism in connection with the blessing of the little children who were brought to him. For these reasons Baptists main-

tain that Jesus not only baptized no infants himself, but that none were baptized during his lifetime.

The Great Commission (Matt. 28: 16ff), given after his death and resurrection as his final instructions and his program for his disciples in the prosecution of the work of the kingdom, not only does not command the administration of baptism to infants but by its terms clearly excludes the practice. "Go . . . make disciples . . . baptizing them . . . teaching them." It is a missionary program. A conscious world is to be brought into the position of discipleship to Jesus Christ and then baptized and taught all the fullness of the gospel. It has no application to infants. In the view of Christ the whole world is and will remain a mission field. He has no program but a mission program. There is no plan of work except that of making disciples by the preaching of the gospel, then baptizing and teaching them. If the whole world were converted today the work of evangelizing would need to be taken up again tomorrow. In the very nature of the case it is a continuous task. The fact that one's parents are Christians has no bearing on one's own life except as it gives greater opportunities to know saving truth. The Commission affords no warrant for the baptism of any but disciples.

But what was the practice of the apostles? Did they baptize infants or give instructions to begin that practice? So far as known no respectable

pedobaptist scholar claims that there are any apostolic instructions on the subject of infant-baptism. Nor do they claim that there are any certain cases of its administration in apostolic history. Here as earlier in the gospel narrative the most that can be claimed is a few passages from which it is thought that infant-baptism can be legitimately inferred. Let us examine these.

There are certain passages which refer to the baptism of "households" and it is claimed that infant-baptism can be legitimately inferred from these incidents. The argument is about as follows: Households often have infants in them, therefore there were infants in these households; these households were baptized, therefore the infants were baptized; the infants were baptized in these cases, therefore it was the custom of the apostles to baptize infants. Such is the argument. Its weakness as an argument is so obvious that its logical inconclusiveness need not be pointed out. Let us rather study the cases under consideration. They are five: Cornelius at Cæsarea, Lydia and the jailer at Philippi, Stephanas and Crispus at Corinth. The first case occurred in the experience of Peter, the other four in that of Paul.

The case of the Roman centurion Cornelius is related in Acts 10 and 11. Is there any evidence here that Peter has broken away from the practice of his Master and his own earlier practice and begun the baptizing of infants? He is making one great innovation in that he is preaching

to Gentiles for the first time; is he making another by baptizing infants? The supposition is in itself improbable. But we are not left to surmise in this case. In Acts 10: 2, Cornelius is said to have been "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house;" in 10: 44 it is said that "the Holy Spirit fell on all them that heard the word;" the Jewish Christians present "were amazed" "because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God" (10: 45f). It is manifest that there were no infants in this household. They were all devout before the visit of Peter; they all heard the word; the Spirit fell on all of them and they all spake with tongues. These statements could not be true of infants.

So far, then, as the evidence reveals his practice, Peter continued baptizing believers and believers only, as his Master had done. But what of Paul? He never knew Jesus personally. Did he depart from the practice and the command of Jesus his Lord as he carried the gospel "far hence to the Gentiles"? It is not likely, to say the least. But let us examine the recorded cases. The first is that of Lydia, the seller of purple at Philippi. She was converted, and she and her household were baptized (Acts 16: 14f). It is assumed by pedobaptists, apparently with great confidence, that there were infants in this household, and that Paul, therefore, baptized infants. But several things are to be noted in connection

with the case. In the first place, there is no mention of infants or even of a husband. The claim that there were children of any age is a pure assumption, for the word "household" may mean servants or employees as in the case of "Cæsar's household" (Phil. 4: 22), where it can mean only imperial employees. Certainly none of the imperial children, Nero's children, were members of the church of Rome at that time. Lydia was a merchant woman far from her Asiatic home at Thyatira, engaged in business, a consideration which makes it intrinsically improbable that she had infant children. Almost certainly "household" here means employees. Being a pious woman, she had gathered about her a company of like-minded workers who would be prepared to receive the gospel. Doubtless her own piety had further prepared them, so that Paul found in them a ripe field which quickly yielded to the gospel story. The Lord opened their hearts to receive the gospel as he did that of their mistress, and so Paul baptized them on precisely the same conditions on which he baptized their employer. This is certainly the most reasonable and intrinsically probable view to take of this incident. It may be that the nucleus of the church of Philippi was in the sales-rooms of Lydia. Certainly if the presence of infants in this household cannot be emphatically denied, neither can it be categorically asserted.

The next case to claim attention is that of the jailer at Philippi who was baptized with his



household, "all his" (Acts 16: 33). In this instance the household certainly had no infants, for when the alarmed and repentant jailer fell trembling at the feet of the missionaries and asked what he must do to be saved, Paul replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house" (verse 31). These instructions mean either that the "house" is to be saved on the same terms as the jailer, that is, by faith in Jesus Christ, or that the jailer's faith will serve for the salvation of the entire household. Clearly the "house" is expected to believe like the head of the house, and only such as believed would be saved. Vicarious faith is unknown to the Scriptures. In complete harmony with this view "they spake the word of the Lord unto him, with all that were in his house," and when they accepted the good news, they were baptized, "he and all his, immediately." He then "brought them up into his house, and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, with all his house, having believed in God" (verse 34). All those in this household were expected to believe and be saved like the jailer, the word was preached to them as to him, they were baptized like him when they believed, they rejoiced like him after their baptism. Clearly there were no infants in this household.

The other two cases of household baptisms took place at Corinth. They are the households of Stephanas and Crispus. The former "house" contributed the "first fruits," that is, the first

converts, not only of the city of Corinth, but also of the whole district of Achaia (1 Cor. 16: 15). Luke, in Acts, tells us nothing of the circumstances of their conversion, but Paul says (1 Cor. 1: 16) that he himself baptized this household among the few baptisms which he administered at Corinth. Stephanas was later an active and useful Christian man as he with two other brethren crossed the Ægean sea to Ephesus to minister to Paul during his long mission in that great city. As in the other cases of household baptisms, nothing is said of any infants in this case; and there is a strong presumption against their presence, because when Paul wrote from Ephesus to this church three or four years later, he says that the household of Stephanas "have set themselves to minister unto the saints" (1 Cor. 16: 15). This could hardly be said if part of the family were infants at the time of their baptism shortly before.

Crispus was a very prominent Jew of Corinth, the ruler of the synagogue on Paul's arrival. He, too, was baptized by Paul himself, doubtless with all his house, though that is not stated. In his case, however, it is distinctly stated that he "believed in the Lord with all his house," a statement which absolutely excludes the presence of infants in his household. The effect of the conversion of this prominent family was very great, for "many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized" (Acts 18: 8).



These are the cases of household baptism upon which our pedobaptist brethren are accustomed to lay so much stress as proofs of the practice of infant-baptism by the apostles. But it has been fairly shown that in every instance the presumption is clearly against rather than in favor of the presence in the households of infants or children too young to believe. Even in a Christian land like ours every Baptist preacher with much experience has been called on to baptize whole households, who together had accepted the Lord Jesus. In the mission work of the first century when there had been such wide-spread providential preparation for the preaching of the gospel whole families must have accepted the gospel together very frequently.

Moreover, if these passages prove the practice of infant-baptism, they would prove entirely too much for evangelical pedobaptists; for it is assumed in the text that those baptized were saved. Now, if there were infants and they were saved, it was accomplished through the faith of their parents, that is, entirely by proxy, or by the magical effects of baptism. And, still further, these children were not born of parents who were believers when the children were born, so that they could not have inherited the blessings which are by some pedobaptists supposed to accrue to the children of Christian parents in a Christian family. These cases could, therefore, afford no ground for the contention that baptism succeeds circumcision and must be limited to the children

of Christian parents. None of the reasons for baptizing infants which are usually advanced in modern times could possibly have been operative in these instances of household baptism, even if it were granted that infants were present and baptized. Our modern evangelical pedobaptist overthrows his own arguments by citing these instances.

Christian households are mentioned in a few other passages by Paul (Rom. 16: 10, 11; Phil. 4: 22; 2 Tim. 1: 15-18; 4: 19). In every instance there is a strong presumption against the presence of infants in these households and in one case, that of Narcissus (Rom. 16: 11), the believing members of the house are distinguished from the unbelieving. The conclusion seems inevitable that the so-called household baptisms give no support to the practice of infant-baptism.

## CHAPTER IV.

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### INFANT-BAPTISM AND THE SCRIPTURES, CONTINUED.

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Two other passages are frequently cited in support of the practice of infant-baptism. They are Acts 2: 39 and 1 Cor. 10: 2. The first passage is in the midst of Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost. When his trenchant discourse led his hearers to cry out, "Brethren, what shall we do?" he responded, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit," just as the little Christian company had done. "For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him." It is claimed that the word "children" in this passage warrants the baptism of infants, for the promise is to the children as to those who heard and understood Peter. But is this the meaning? "Children" here does not mean "infants" but "offspring" or "descendants." What is the meaning, then, of the passage? It seems to be about as follows: "You see that we have obtained the gift of the Holy Spirit according to the promise of Joel 2: 28; but this promise was not intended for us alone; re-

pent therefore, and be baptized every one of you in the name of the Lord Jesus and you, too, as well as we, will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, for the promise of the Spirit is to you also; in fact it is not limited to you, for it is to your children (offspring), and indeed to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call, on exactly the same terms, namely, repentance, faith and baptism." Faith is implied, of course. Peter simply means that the gift of the Holy Spirit will be conferred on his hearers and their children and "all that are afar off" if they comply with the conditions of repentance, faith and baptism; he means to say that that little group of Christians have no monopoly on the possession of the Spirit, but that he will be given to all others on the same conditions. Infants cannot repent; they are not, therefore, baptized nor do they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit promised by Joel. In accordance with these conditions, the narrative proceeds to say, "They then that received his word were baptized." None except those who received the word were baptized, and hence no infants. The passage not only affords no ground for infant-baptism, but directly and powerfully opposes the practice.

The second passage, 1 Cor. 10: 2, is equally conclusive against infant-baptism when it is studied in its context. Paul is pleading with the Corinthian church to abstain from the gross sins which had once characterized them and which had not been wholly rooted out. He warns them

by recalling the sorrowful history of Israel, saying in effect, "Beware, remember the fate of Israel! They, too, were baptized between the cloud and the sea unto Moses even as you were baptized unto Christ; they, too, all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink which you enjoy, for they drank of the Rock Christ who was following them; notwithstanding these facts, God was displeased with most of them and overthrew them in the wilderness; they passed through substantially the same experiences as you and yet they perished; beware, therefore, and live righteously." It is argued by pedobaptists that the infants as well as the adults of Israel were baptized figuratively as they crossed the Red Sea, and that it must have been customary to baptize the infants of Christian parents when Paul wrote, else his illustration would not have been appropriate. But it should be observed that nothing is said here about Christian baptism; therefore, whatever conclusion is drawn must be by way of inference. Moreover, analogies are rarely capable of application in every particular. But supposing the analogy in this case to be complete, what bearing does the passage have on the practice of infant-baptism? It is true that Hebrew infants were figuratively immersed along with the adults between the cloud and the sea as the nation crossed. But is Paul thinking of the infants as baptized unto Moses that day along with the adults? Certainly not. He is considering those only who ate the spiritual

food and drank the spiritual drink and who then displeased God and as a consequence fell in the wilderness. These and these only were thought of as having been baptized in the sea. Reference to the incident to which Paul refers shows that those who died were twenty years old and upward shortly after they crossed the sea when they refused to go up and take the land, that is, they were all over eighteen years of age when they were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea (Num. 14: 29ff; 26: 64f). Those under this age did not fall in the wilderness but entered the promised land, and therefore could not have been any part of Paul's illustration. They did not come into his mind as baptized, simply because he knew nothing of infant-baptism even as his readers did not. It was not the irresponsible infants, but the conscious adults who were baptized and later rebelled against Moses who afforded such a striking warning to sinful church members at Corinth.

But while these passages fail to establish the apostolic character of infant-baptism, and in most cases actually weigh against belief in its apostolic origin when considered in the light of their contexts, we are not left to these passages alone; much other positive information as to the practice of these early Christian workers can be found.

Philip was one of the "seven" selected by the church of Jerusalem to serve tables. He was evidently in thorough harmony with the mother church as is shown by their confidence.

When he with the rest were driven away by the fury of Saul of Tarsus he went down to Samaria and began preaching there. His labors were attended with great success and "when they believed Philip . . . they were baptized, both men and women. And Simon also himself believed: and being baptized, he continued," etc. Evidently Philip baptized none but believers, and he must have represented the practice of the Jerusalem church at that time (Acts 8: 12f).

Paul's practice and views are further elucidated by passages in his letters. In Romans 6: 1-7, he discusses the status of those who have been baptized. They have been sinners but have died to sin and can no longer continue therein; they have been baptized into the death of Christ; the old man of sin has been crucified with him and buried with him. Certainly such statements as these could not be made about unconscious infants.

Again he mentions baptism in the letter to the churches of Galatia (3: 27). Arguing against their lapse into legal righteousness he says: "Ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Jesus Christ. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ." Manifestly only those were baptized in the Galatian churches who were sons of God "through faith."

In Colossians 2: 12, Paul again links baptism with faith, saying to the Colossian church, you were "buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the



working of God, who raised him from the dead." Faith was present in this baptism. In fact, there is nothing in Paul's writings which fairly interpreted gives the slightest warrant for the belief that he knew anything of infant-baptism. First Corinthians 7: 14 counts directly and positively against the existence of the practice.

One passage in Peter's First Letter (3: 21) throws some further light on his views and practice. He says baptism is "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God." With this conception of baptism it could not be administered except where there is a conscience, that is, to persons who have come to years of moral accountability. Infants are excluded.

One other scriptural argument in favor of infant-baptism must be noticed. It is the claim that baptism succeeded to circumcision and should, therefore, be administered to infants as circumcision was. This argument is regarded as very strong and even conclusive by some of the advocates of infant-baptism. Let us examine this contention. In the first place certain very striking differences between circumcision and baptism should be noted: Circumcision was based on natural birth, baptism on a spiritual rebirth; omission of circumcision was accompanied by certain definite and very serious material and temporal consequences, while no one can point to any harmful consequences of any kind due to the omission of infant-baptism; circumcision was



administered to Jewish male children only, while baptism is administered to both sexes of every race; circumcision was racial, baptism is personal and for all races; the Jews who had been circumcised in infancy were nevertheless baptized on their conversion to Christianity and a large section of Jewish Christians (the so-called Judaizers) believed that the Gentile Christians must not only be baptized, but also be circumcised after baptism, two facts which show conclusively that Jewish Christians did not regard baptism as a substitute for circumcision. The Jewish opposition to Christianity would have been still more violent if the Jews had thought that baptism abolished circumcision by succeeding to it.

Let us now see if the Scriptures themselves furnish any basis for this contention. As the gospel spread into communities composed of both Jews and Gentiles the distinction between circumcised and uncircumcised gave the Christian churches great trouble. The deepest cleft in the social body of that ancient world was the distinction between Jew and Gentile. How did Christianity transcend and overcome this rift? It was not accomplished without great strife and difficulty extending over many years. Paul as the leading missionary to the Gentiles felt the full weight of the burden through all the years of his later life. How useless the controversy and how simple the solution if only he and the other Christians had understood that baptism succeeded to circumcision as pedobaptists allege! All that

long and painful controversy with the Judaizers which has left such a deep mark on Acts, Romans and Galatians, would have been avoided. But the converts from the Jews were baptized on their profession of faith notwithstanding their circumcision, and the Judaizers contended that the converts from paganism must be circumcised notwithstanding their baptism. Now, if Paul had only been sufficiently informed, as some peditbaptists are, concerning the relation between baptism and circumcision, he could have said: "You are all very foolish. Baptism succeeds circumcision; therefore, the Jews who are converted do not need to be baptized and the pagans who are converted and baptized do not need to be circumcised." But he did not meet the difficulty in this way. What did he do? He nowhere even intimated that there was any relation or even analogy between circumcision and baptism, much less that one succeeded the other. He argued with the Judaizers that the original basis of justification was faith not circumcision (a doctrine which had also been taught in the Old Testament: Deut. 10: 16; 30: 6; Jer. 4: 4; 9: 26), and that Abraham "received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while he was in uncircumcision: that he might be the father of all them that believe" (Rom. 4: 11); that circumcision never profited except as it was accompanied by obedience, for "if thou be a transgressor of the law, thy circumcision is become uncircumcision" and

useless (Rom. 2: 25); that it is now abolished or succeeded by faith in Christ, "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit not in the letter" (Rom. 2: 28f); "Was any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing" (1 Cor. 7: 18f); "Behold, I Paul say unto you, that, if ye receive circumcision, Christ will profit you nothing . . . For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith working through love" (Gal. 5: 2 and 6); "As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they compel you to be circumcised; only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. . . . For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature" (Gal. 6: 12, 15); in Christ "ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ" (Col. 2: 11); "for we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3: 3). These passages are sufficient (they could be greatly multiplied) to show that Paul had no idea whatsoever that baptism succeeded circumcision. Rather the old ceremony was abolished by the cross of Christ; circumcision, if the old verbiage must be retained, is of the heart, not made by

hands but by faith in Christ. He that insists on circumcision makes the cross void. In all the multitude of passages in which Paul treats circumcision he couples it with baptism but once (Col. 2: 11f), and there he bases baptism on faith. If baptism is in any sense like circumcision it is the circumcision of Abraham himself, based on his faith, and not that of his descendants based on birth and racial descent.

All the pedobaptist arguments from Scripture are utterly worthless and futile, and many of their scholars are recognizing this fact and transferring the basis of argument to another field, as will be seen in a later chapter.

## CHAPTER V.

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### INFANT-BAPTISM APPEARS AT END OF SECOND CENTURY.

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NOT only is there no warrant in the Scriptures for the belief that infant-baptism was practiced or enjoined either by Christ or the apostles, but subsequent history reveals the fact that it did not appear anywhere until near the end of the second century, more than one hundred and fifty years after the death of Christ, and was administered only by way of exception for centuries after that time.

For the first eighty or ninety years after the death of the last apostle there is not the faintest trace in Christian literature of the practice. From many parts of the Christian world literature from this period has been preserved and handed down to us, and in this literature repentance and faith are everywhere assumed as conditions of baptism. Nor were the Christian churches of that period capable of that hollow mockery in which a proxy says in the name of the child, "I repent," "I believe." To the early church everything connected with its religion was real, genuine and vital. Each one repented, believed and was baptized for himself. The age of magic and proxies had not come.

Very early a saving significance was ascribed to baptism, but repentance and faith were always required before baptism. Baptism was always a faith-baptism even though it was thought to secure remission. A few extracts from this literature will show the accuracy of these statements. In the following pages all the literature of any importance which has any bearing on the subject of infant-baptism in this period is quoted.

Probably the earliest reference to baptism in post-biblical literature is found in the Epistle of Barnabas. Neither the place nor the date of its composition is known, but it probably comes from Syria and dates from 100 to 120 A.D. Some scholars put it earlier. Reference is made to baptism in chapter XI, where the author in commenting on Psalm I says: "Blessed are they who, placing their trust in the cross, have gone down into the water." Later, in the same chapter, in commenting on a passage in Ezekiel, he says: "This meaneth, that we indeed descend into the water full of sins and defilement, but come up, bearing fruit in our heart, having fear and trust in Jesus in our spirit." The author finds baptism in passages where it does not exist, and gives to it a significance which it never had in Scripture, but it is perfectly evident that he knows nothing about infant-baptism. Those who are baptized have already put their trust in the cross and they come up from the water with the fear and trust of Jesus in their spirits. These are not the experiences of unconscious infants.

The implication against the practice of infant-baptism at this date is unmistakable.

Another work of unknown authorship, probably coming from the same period and region as the Epistle of Barnabas, is "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles." It is a sort of pastor's handbook, evidently intended for general circulation and use in Christian instruction. It, therefore, probably represents the beliefs and practices of a wide circle of Christians about 120 A.D. Chapter VII gives instructions for the proper administration of baptism, as follows: "Having first said all these things" (*i. e.*, having taught the contents of the preceding chapters) "baptize in the name of the Father, etc. . . . But before the baptism let the baptizer fast, and the baptized, and whatever others can; but thou shalt order the baptized to fast one or two days before." These regulations require the candidate to be instructed in the moral precepts of the earlier chapters of the book, and to fast at least two days before baptism. These are rather hard conditions to be imposed upon infants. Manifestly the author knows nothing of infant-baptism. Baptism so far as he knows it is administered to those who can learn and fast, and to no others.

The ablest Christian writer of the second century was Justin Martyr. He was born about 110 A.D., at Samaria, in Palestine, of Gentile parents. He obtained a finished education and traveled widely, devoting himself to the study of various systems of philosophy in a vain attempt to



find satisfaction for his mind and his heart. After his very striking and interesting conversion to Christianity he spent the remainder of his life in the service of his new-found faith, traveling, writing, conversing, debating with all whom he met, while he continued to wear his philosopher's cloak. He thus learned the practices of the churches by direct contact with them over wide areas of the ancient Christian world, and therefore speaks with unusual weight on all matters pertaining to the Christian customs of his time. About 145 A.D. he addressed an "Apology," or defense of the Christians, to the Emperor Antoninus Pius and the Roman people, in which he refuted the charges made against the Christians and carefully explained just what they did practice. In chapter LXI he describes and explains to his pagan opponents and persecutors Christian baptism. He says to them: "I will also relate the manner in which we dedicated ourselves to God when we had been made new through Christ. . . . As many as are persuaded and believe that what we teach and say is true, and undertake to be able to live accordingly, are instructed to pray and to entreat God with fasting, for the remission of their sins that are past, we praying and fasting with them. Then they are brought by us where there is water, and are regenerated in the same manner in which we were ourselves regenerated. For in the name of God, the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, they then receive the washing with water."



In chapter LXV he continues, in treating of the Supper: "But we, after we have thus washed him who has been convinced and has consented to our teaching, we bring him to the place where those who are called brethren are assembled, in order that we may offer hearty prayers in common for ourselves and for the baptized person. . . . Having ended the prayers, we salute one another with a kiss. There is then brought to the president of the brethren bread and a cup of wine mixed with water," and the Supper is celebrated.

It is perfectly evident that Justin, while believing that baptism is the bath of regeneration, yet knows nothing of the baptism of infants. Those who are baptized have committed sins, they choose to be born again, they repent and believe the Christian teachings and undertake to live accordingly, they fast and pray before baptism and join in the celebration of the Lord's Supper immediately afterwards. These are not the experiences of infants. And in this connection it should be noted that this widely traveled Christian man is stating not his own convictions and practices only, but the practices of the Christian churches in general throughout the Roman empire for the information of the Roman emperor and people. Had he been perverting the facts his deception could have been exposed by hosts of his readers. Evidently the churches in the Roman empire at the middle of the second century were unacquainted with any baptism other than faith-baptism.

The next writer to be considered is Hermas. He was a brother of Pius, bishop of the church of Rome from about 140 to 154. His position as brother of the Roman bishop gave him exceptional opportunities for acquaintance with the beliefs and practices of the Christian world, for Rome was the center of Christian life for all the western churches and kept up intimate relations with those of the East as well. About 160 Hermas wrote a strange apocalyptic book which he called the "Shepherd." It was held in such high esteem by the churches of that day that it was long read in the public services as the books now in our New Testament were used. It must, therefore, have represented the beliefs and practices of that time, else it would not have been so used. Like Justin a few years earlier, it ascribes saving efficacy to baptism, knowing no other means for the remission of sins. As seen in "Vision" III, chapters II to IX, and in "Similitude" IX, the growing "Church" is compared to a tower which is being built upon the water and whose stones are drawn up out of the water, indicating that Hermas regards baptism as the very foundation of the Church. But there is not an intimation of infant-baptism. On the contrary, the implication is very clear for faith-baptism. In "Commandment" IV, chapter III, Hermas says to his angelic instructor, "I heard sir, some teachers maintain that there is no other repentance than that which takes place when we descended into the water and received remission

of our sins." Baptism is believed to secure remission but it is preceded by repentance, and so infant-baptism is excluded. Infants were regarded by Hermas as innocent and since baptism in his thought was for the removal of sin, it never occurred to him that they should be baptized. (Similitude IX, chapters XVI, XXIX, XXXI.)

For about thirty years after the date of the "Shepherd" we have no literature of any importance bearing on the subject of baptism. But near the end of the second century three men of capital importance to the history of Christianity appear in widely separated regions. They are Clement in Egypt, Irenæus in Gaul or modern France, and Tertullian in North Africa. All of them were men of the highest ability and of great learning and influence; consequently their testimony is of the greatest value. Let us see what we can glean from their extensive writings.

Clement was the most cultured Christian of his day, having traveled and studied in all the lands of the eastern Mediterranean. From 193 to 202 he was head of the catechetical school at Alexandria, the greatest Christian school of the ancient world. In connection with his teaching he wrote extensively, and various writings have been preserved to us. In a work entitled "The Pedagogue," or "Instructor," he sets forth his ideal of Christian teachings, practices and life. The book is intended for general use as a manual for the instruction of Christians. Naturally it treats baptism along with other subjects on which some

instruction was felt to be necessary. These instructions for Christian readers are exactly in accord with what we have already learned from earlier writers. He believes that baptism is the appointed means for the remission of sins, but he knows nothing of infant-baptism. In Book I, chapter VI, he assigns wonderful power to baptism, but says: "Instruction leads to faith, and faith with baptism is trained by the Holy Spirit." In another connection he says: "In the same way, therefore, we also, repenting of our sins, renouncing our iniquities, purified by baptism, speed back to the eternal light, children to the Father." He makes baptism follow repentance and renunciation of sins, and there is not in this book intended for Christian instruction or in any other of his voluminous writings a line to indicate that he had ever heard of infant-baptism.

Even pedobaptist writers admit that the literature of the second century so far examined is silent about infant-baptism, though they fail to see its powerful support of faith-baptism. But we have reached the point where they claim to discover the practice of a non-faith baptism of infants. As we approach the study of these documents let us remember that they were written nearly a century after the death of the last apostle, time enough for momentous changes in the beliefs and practices of the Christian world as we have already seen.

Irenæus was born in Asia Minor before the middle of the second century and died at Lyons,

in France, after 190. He studied under the famous Polycarp of Smyrna, and went while still a young man with the Greek emigrants to Lyons, where he became bishop in 177. His official position in this the most important church in that part of the world at that time afforded excellent opportunities for knowing Christian usages, and also laid upon him exceptional responsibility for preserving and perpetuating these usages. Moreover, he had come from Asia, where he had been trained in the best Christian practices, into the West in his young manhood. On his long journey he had almost certainly visited many of the leading churches on the northern shores of the Mediterranean, learning at first hand their usages. Surely if any one will know and insist on strict observance of correct ecclesiastical ceremonial it is he. Does he insist on the practice of infant-baptism? He does not once enjoin it, and there is no case of its administration by him. No one claims the discovery of either in his writings.

But it is claimed that infant-baptism is implied in one passage of his work "Against Heresies," published about 190. By putting together two widely separated passages (II, 22, 4, and III, 17, 1), some pedobaptist scholars claim that they discover infant-baptism. The first passage reads as follows: "He (Jesus) came to save all through means of himself—all, I say, who through him are born again to God—infants, and children, and boys, and youths, and old men. He therefore passed through every age, becoming an infant for

infants, a child for children," etc. This is the crucial passage. With it is coupled the second which reads: "Giving to the disciples the power of regeneration into God, he said to them, Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father," etc. It is argued that baptism is recognized in the second passage as the divinely-appointed means of salvation and that infants are mentioned in the first passage as objects of salvation, and that therefore infants must have been baptized.

The passages are notable in the baptismal controversy, in the first place, because they constitute the first reference to infant-baptism in post-biblical literature, granting that they refer to infant-baptism at all; and in the second place because infants are found in one passage and baptism in the other, which is located in another book. In the former of these passages in which infants are mentioned it is said that Jesus became an infant and passed through infancy to save infants. Baptism is not mentioned in the passage or its context. All that is said is that he came to save and sanctify infants and so became an infant. It requires more than usual sagacity to discover infant-baptism here. But granting that it is here it is more than 150 years after the death of Christ before it appears. Faith-baptism has often been described and enjoined in these years, but infant-baptism has not once been mentioned in any way. The conclusion that infant-baptism was neither practiced nor known



earlier than Irenæus seems irresistible, and it is not at all probable that he knew it. Other passages distinctly imply that he did not know any practice other than faith-baptism.

But Tertullian, the next writer to be studied, was certainly acquainted with the practice of baptizing children who were too young to exercise faith, and he was the first Christian writer of whom this can be asserted with confidence. He was born of pagan parents at Carthage, in North Africa, about the middle of the second century. He was educated in rhetoric and law and was converted to Christianity in mature life. The rest of his life his brilliant talents were devoted to the defense and propagation of the Christian faith. He was not a widely traveled man, but reflects Christian usage and opinion in North Africa.

He touches on baptism in many of his writings, and finally composed an entire treatise on that subject. As to the importance of baptism and its place in the remission of sins he is in general accord with earlier writers; it is, in his opinion, under ordinary circumstances the only means of remission, but it is not absolutely necessary, for "sound faith is secure of salvation," provided there is some hindrance to the acquisition of baptism. Repentance and faith are presupposed. In describing baptism (*de corona* III) he says: "When we are going to enter the water, but a little before, in the presence of the congregation and under the hand of the president, we solemnly

profess that we disown the devil, and his pomp, and his angels. Hereupon we are thrice immersed. . . . Then, when we are taken up (as new-born babes) we taste first of all a mixture of milk and honey, and from that day we refrain from the daily bath for a whole week." This is certainly a faith-baptism; no infant could fulfill the conditions. Moreover, the author is describing the common usage of the North African churches at this time, and not stating his own view of what baptism ought to be.

Again in his tract on "Repentance," chapter VI, he urges on his readers that repentance must be genuine and fruitful of good works, but should then be followed by baptism as the seal. Some who professed repentance, relying on baptism to remove all sin at the end of life, were postponing baptism and continuing in sin. Against this custom he contends earnestly that "baptismal washing is a sealing of faith, which faith is begun and is commended by the faith of repentance. We are not washed in order that we may cease sinning, but because we have ceased, since in heart we have been bathed already." This was Tertullian's view as well as the usual practice, but it was not the sole opinion in North Africa about this time. In his tract "On Baptism," written some years later, he reveals and opposes what was probably the very beginnings of child-baptism. Certainly it is the first mention of the practice in literature. In chapter XVIII of this tract he discusses the persons who are to be baptized.



He says a new danger has arisen; people are accepting baptism rashly and without proper spiritual preparation. "But they whose office it is, know that baptism is not rashly to be administered." He admits that the Ethiopian eunuch and Paul were baptized quickly, but he contends that they had a developed faith and were baptized under the imperative of direct providential intervention, and it ought not to be so administered ordinarily. He proceeds, "According to the circumstances and disposition, and even age of each individual, the delay of baptism is preferable; principally, however, in the case of little children (*parvulos*). For why is it necessary—if (baptism itself) is not so necessary—that the sponsors likewise should be thrust into danger? Who both themselves, by reason of mortality, may fail to fulfill their promises, and may be disappointed by the development of an evil disposition in those for whom they stand. The Lord does indeed say, 'Forbid them not to come unto me.' Let them come, then, while they are growing up; let them come while they are learning, while they are learning whither to come; let them become Christians when they have become able to know Christ. Why does the innocent period of life hasten to the remission of sins? . . . Let them know how to ask for salvation that you may seem (at least) to have given to him that asketh."

In this passage we undoubtedly come upon the baptism of children who are too young to exercise repentance and faith. It is evidently not

common and makes the impression of being at its beginning.

From this document we see clearly that as far as history can speak on the subject infant baptism began in North Africa, at Carthage, shortly before the close of the second century. Tertullian, the greatest scholar and writer of the time, opposes the innovation, because the children are in the "innocent period of life," when baptism, the ordinary means of remission, is not needed. Whether it existed here only or was also beginning elsewhere we cannot say. Belief in the saving efficacy of baptism is beginning to show one of its effects; it is leading some to postpone baptism to the end of life while they continue in sin, and inducing others to bring their helpless babes to baptism in the hope of regenerating the child in its unconscious infancy. Christian parents are beginning to believe that babes who die unbaptized are lost. And it is interesting to observe that infant-baptism was so thoroughly in accord with the other sacramental corruptions which were creeping into the churches at this time that Tertullian was the only man, so far as we know, who protested against the introduction of infant-baptism. That it was an innovation at this time is shown by his opposition at Carthage and the silence of his two great contemporaries at Alexandria and Lyons. Nor is there any reason to believe that he was alone in his opposition. Had it been an apostolic tradition it is inconceivable that Tertullian would have opposed it.

## CHAPTER VI.

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### INFANT-BAPTISM SLOWLY GAINS GROUND.

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THE next writer to mention baptism was Hippolytus. He lived at Rome, but was an opponent of the bishop of Rome and himself probably an opposing bishop. He finally suffered martyrdom in 235 A.D. In a sermon on "The Holy Theophany," or baptism of Jesus, he delivers a wonderful panegyric on the dignity and glory of baptism, and its power to remove sin. But in his thought it is received voluntarily and after repentance and faith. In his dramatic style he makes John say to Jesus: "I cannot baptize those who come to me unless they first confess fully their sins. Be it so then that I baptize thee what hast thou to confess? Thou art the remover of sins, and wilt thou be baptized with the baptism of repentance?" (Ref. of Her. 4.) Lest some one should say that he refers to John's baptism only, which was confessedly a "baptism of repentance," I quote from 10, where he is dealing with baptism as it was regarded in his day: "He who comes down in faith to the laver of regeneration, and renounces the devil, and joins himself to Christ; who denies the enemy, and makes the confession that Christ is God; who puts off the

bondage, and puts on the adoption,—he comes up from the baptism brilliant as the sun, flashing forth the beams of righteousness.” If this great scholar and author who lived at Rome, the heart of Western Christendom, knew anything about infant-baptism his writings do not indicate it, but rather the direct contrary.

We return now at the middle of the third century to Carthage and find infant-baptism sufficiently established in this section of North Africa to have the support of a large synod of bishops held at Carthage in the year 252. Many questions have been raised in the course of the centuries by this unevangelical innovation and this synod in 252 dealt with the first one to arise. One Fidus, a bishop of that region, was in doubt as to whether baptism should be administered immediately after the birth of the child or be postponed to the eighth day, after the manner of circumcision. In his perplexity he writes Cyprian, the great bishop of Carthage, for advice. Cyprian would not take the responsibility of deciding so new and weighty a question himself, and, therefore, laid it before a synod of North African bishops of whom sixty were present. They decided unanimously against postponement. The reasons for this decision as stated by Cyprian were as follows: “The mercy and grace of God are not to be refused to any one born of man,” even infants a day old; “God, as he does not accept the person, so does not accept the age;” the baptizer ought not to feel repulsion at kissing a

baby just born as Fidus declared he did; (the administrator then kissed the person baptized); baptism does not succeed to circumcision, "which figure ceased when by and by the truth came, and spiritual circumcision was given to us."

This is the first official approval of infant-baptism in Christian history. It came in the year 252. Can any reasonable man believe that Fidus would not have known whether to postpone baptism till the eighth day and that Cyprian would have called a synod of all the neighboring bishops to decide the matter if infant-baptism had been instituted by Christ, had been practiced by the apostles and the Christian church for over two hundred years? Such a supposition puts a strain on Christian credulity which even the advocates of infant-baptism will find it difficult to bear.

In this chapter we will consider but one more writer, Origen of Alexandria. He was born of Christian parents about 185 and died at Cæsarea in 254. He was a great scholar and teacher, and for a time he was head of the catechetical school at Alexandria. Many of his works, which were written in Greek, have come down to us only in the Latin translations made by Jerome and Rufinus a century after the author's death. In these Latin translations there are several striking references to infant-baptism, while a few passages in his extant Greek works seem to indicate a knowledge of the practice, though it is not expressly mentioned in any extant Greek text. These phenomena have led some scholars to sus-

pect that the Latin text has been corrupted by interpolation. This may be the case, but infant-baptism, as we have seen, was practiced at Carthage before his death, and may have been known to him. The manner in which the subject is treated indicates that it was an innovation and was causing no end of discussion and trouble. In a homily on Luke 14, he says: "I will mention a thing that causes frequent inquiries among the brethren. Infants are baptized for the forgiveness of sins. Of what sins? Or when have they sinned? Or how can any reason of the laver in their case hold good, but according to that sense that we mentioned even now: none is free from pollution, though his life be but of the length of one day upon the earth? And it is for that reason because by the sacrament of baptism the pollution of our sin is taken away." This quotation, if genuine in Origen's writings, reveals the fact of the practice and the reason assigned for the same. However, the passage upon which pedobaptists lay most stress is in his commentary on Romans, Lib. V, chapter 9, where he says: "For this (original sin) also it was, that the church had from the apostles a tradition to give baptism even unto infants." This is the first assertion in Christian literature of apostolic authority for infant-baptism. Naturally, pedobaptists have emphasized its significance and importance. But it should be remembered that Origen, great scholar though he was, made serious blunders about other matters, and was certainly not infallible as to in-



fant-baptism; the reasons which he assigns for the practice would hardly be accepted as correct by evangelical Protestants. If, then, he were wrong as to the reasons for baptism may he not have been wrong as to its origin. Besides he himself cites no Scripture in its support as he certainly would have done had he known any. The most that he dared to assert in his conscientious efforts to sustain a growing ecclesiastical custom, was apostolic tradition. What corruptions have crept into the church through traditions! Infant-baptism is confessedly one.

As we have seen in the preceding pages infant-baptism was practiced with ecclesiastical recognition at Carthage as early as 250 A.D. Moreover, Origen, at Alexandria, if we can trust the Latin translation of his works, knew of the practice and believed that it had been handed down by tradition from the apostles, though he made no claim that it was scriptural. But it must not be concluded from these facts that it was practiced throughout the entire Christian world at that time, or was the general custom even at Carthage. Even here it was still probably exceptional, administered only in cases of dangerous illness or for some other special reason. It made progress very slowly and is not found in other lands until far down into the fourth century. Indeed, it may be called Africa's distinctive contribution to Christian history.

The brief compass of this work will not permit more than a few quotations illustrating the



growth of the practice from this point onward to its complete triumph. These will, however, be sufficient to show the general progress up to the Reformation.

The next book to be noticed is Apostolic Constitutions. It serves as a manual of instruction in church order intended for the instruction of clergy and laity. The author or authors are unknown and the date and place of composition are likewise uncertain. It is generally agreed, however, that it could not have been written before 250 A.D., and many scholars believe it to have been compiled many years later. Baptism is treated extensively and often, and always with the clear implication that only believers are to be baptized. Repentance, faith and instruction are uniformly required. In Book III, chapter XVII we read: "Let him that is to be baptized be free from all iniquity; one that has left off to work sin, the friend of God, the enemy of the devil, the heir of God the Father, the fellow-heir of his Son; one that has renounced Satan, and the demons, and Satan's deceits; chaste," etc.

The above quotation fairly represents the general tenor of the entire work as can be seen in Book II, chapter VII, and Book VII, chapters XXI and XXXIX and the following chapters, where there is extended instructions as to the preparation of the candidate for baptism and also the ritual to be used in its administration. The ritual is for believers only. But in Book VI, chapter XV, there is an argument against the

postponement of baptism till just before death, as was frequently done, and the chapter closes with these two sentences: "Do you also baptize your infants, and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. For, says he, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not!'" These two sentences, if they are genuine, constitute the earliest injunction to parents to have their infants baptized to be found in Christian literature. But in view of the fact that they contain the only reference to infant-baptism in the entire work and flatly contradict all its other teachings concerning baptism, it seems very probable that they are a later interpolation. But granting that they are genuine, they bring the first ecclesiastical recommendation of infant-baptism down to a date subsequent to 250 A.D., more than 200 years after the death of Jesus.

In a curious collection of literature going under the name of Clement and coming probably from the third century there are many references to baptism. Infant-baptism is nowhere mentioned or implied, but repentance and faith are everywhere presupposed.

This brief survey has touched on all the literature of the subject in the third century. We pass now to the fourth. It was replete with great men and consequently is rich in literature. During the first half of the century the great Arian controversy turned men's minds to the doctrine of the person of Christ. Baptism is mentioned

only occasionally and incidentally, but in these incidental references there is no trace of infant-baptism. Unfortunately we have no literature from Carthage where we know infant-baptism was practiced, and the literature we have does not reveal its existence anywhere else. On the contrary, it still indicates that believers only were baptized. Some of the more important of these writers will now be examined.

Cyril, the great bishop of Jerusalem (d. 386), left behind him twenty-three lectures delivered to catechumens or those who were preparing for baptism. They constitute a body of instruction with which catechumens were expected to be familiar before they received baptism. In lectures nineteen and twenty he treats baptism, and there is not a hint that there is such a thing on the earth as infant-baptism. On the contrary, repentance and faith are required. The ritual of baptism, used at Jerusalem, is given in detail. It requires the candidate, standing in the baptistry, to face the west and renounce Satan and all his works, and then face the east and repeat the creed, etc. These acts are impossible for infants.

Neither Eusebius, the first great Christian historian (d. 340), nor Basil the Great (d. 379), nor his brother, Gregory of Nyssa (d. 395), mentions infant-baptism. Basil's view of baptism may be seen from the following quotation from his work "On the Spirit," chapter 12: "Faith and baptism are two kindred and inseparable ways of salvation: faith is perfected

through baptism, baptism is established through faith, and both are completed by the same names. For as we believe in the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, so were we also baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: first comes the confession, introducing us to salvation, and baptism follows, setting the seal on our assent." Nothing could be more clearly opposed to infant-baptism.

Gregory of Nyssa in his work on "The Great Catechism," a manual of instructions for those who prepare catechumens for baptism, is almost as clear and explicit. In speaking of the removal of sin he says (chapter XXV): "Two things concurring to this removal of sin—the penitence of the transgressor and his imitation of the death (in his immersion). By these two things the man is in a measure freed from his congenital tendency to evil; by his penitence he advances to a hatred of and averseness from sin, and by his death (baptism) he works out the suppression of evil." Again, in chapter XXXIX, he makes this remarkable statement which absolutely precludes the possibility of infant-baptism: "While all things else that are born are subject to the impulse of those that beget them, the spiritual birth is dependent on the power of him who is being born;" that is, the free choice of the human will is a necessary condition of spiritual birth. Since baptism was regarded as the indispensable means of rebirth, baptism must have been administered on the voluntary action of a believer.

Gregory Nazianzen was one of the great pulpit orators of the fourth century, a theologian and defender of orthodoxy. Because of the splendor of his gifts he was chosen in 379 to be bishop or patriarch of Constantinople, next to Rome the most important see in Christendom. In this pulpit he preached in 381 a sermon on "Holy Baptism." The general tenor of the sermon shows conclusively that the usual practice in Constantinople was still faith-baptism. He addresses adults concerning their own baptism, pleads with them not to postpone baptism to the end of life, but "let some time intervene between the grave and death, that not only the account of sins be wiped out, but something better be written in its place" (XII). While the whole sermon is addressed to adults, urging them, against their reluctance and excuses, to be baptized, he also mentions infant-baptism. He is the first writer in the Eastern or Greek church, indeed the first outside of Africa, to touch the subject or indicate in any way any acquaintance with the existence of such a practice. Like Tertullian, the first to mention infant-baptism in Africa, Gregory the first to mention it outside of Africa, is opposed to it except in cases of dangerous illness. He represents the people as uncertain as to their duty in the matter, positive evidence that it was an innovation and by no means established among them. He says they ask: "What have you to say about those who are still children, and conscious neither of the loss nor of the grace? Are

we to baptize them, too?" His answer is: "Certainly, if any danger presses. For it is better that they be unconsciously sanctified than that they should depart unsealed and uninitiated. But in respect of others I give my advice to wait till the end of the third year, or a little more or less, when they may be able to listen and to answer something about the sacrament: that even though they do not perfectly understand it, yet at any rate they may know the outlines; and then to sanctify them in soul and body with the great sacrament of our consecration. For this is how the matter stands; at that time they begin to be responsible for their lives, when reason is matured and they learn the mystery of life" (XXVIII). From this excerpt it is evident that at Constantinople in 381 A.D. the facts concerning infant-baptism were as follows: (1) Infant-baptism was not generally practiced; (2) the people were in doubt as to its value, and were opposed to it; (3) the great bishop recommended it only in cases of dangerous illness; (4) in the case of healthy children he advised its postponement until the children "begin to be responsible for their lives."

The next writer to be noticed is John Chrysostom, "the golden-mouthed." He became bishop of Constantinople in 396 and died in 407. He is of course acquainted with infant-baptism, but his homilies make it perfectly clear that it is still the exception. He does not oppose it, neither does

he recommend it. It is to him simply an allowable alternative time for baptism.

Returning now to the Western or Latin church, we find no certain evidence of the practice of infant-baptism outside of Africa on the north side of the Mediterranean before the end of the fourth century. Ambrose, the great bishop of Milan (d. 397), in his treatment of baptism in his work "On the Mysteries," chapters I-VII, does not intimate that there is such a thing as infant-baptism, but rather treats the whole subject as if the only persons to be baptized were instructed believers. In his description of the ceremonial he says that candidates renounce the devil and his works, accept Christ, are dipped in water, put on white clothing, etc. However, there are two passages which indicate that he may have been acquainted with the practice. Jerome does not treat the subject of baptism.



## CHAPTER VII

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### INFANT-BAPTISM TRIUMPHANT THROUGH BAPTISMAL REGENERATION.

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WE come now to the great character whose genius did so much to fix the customs and work out the theological buttresses of the Catholic church, Augustine, bishop of Hippo (354-430). Again it is North Africa where progress is made in the history of infant-baptism. We have now reached the period when the doctrine of infant-baptism is settled for the Catholic church in an effort to justify it against its opponents and those who doubted. Augustine is a saint in the Roman church, and he richly deserves the distinction if one can earn it by service, for it was he who first gave a consistent theological basis for many of the distinctive doctrines of that church, among them infant-baptism. His noble mother, Monnica, did not have him baptized as an infant, desiring to wait till the danger of youthful pollutions was in some measure past. When a boy he fell quite ill and requested baptism, but she refused it even under those distressing circumstances and he was not baptized till his conversion in mature life.

In the course of his life he was involved in many controversies in which he wrought out the

theological basis of the Catholic church. One of these was with Pelagius, a British monk, over the nature of sin and grace and salvation. In this controversy infant-baptism came under serious discussion for the first time in history so far as our literary sources enable us to follow the history. The Pelagians believing that infants were innocent, sinless, could find no logical and satisfactory reason for baptizing them. Apparently they had at first denied the necessity and doubted the expediency of the practice; later they admitted its importance, but could never render an effective reason for the practice on the basis of their view of the innocence of infants.

Augustine believed profoundly that human nature was corrupt and sinful from birth; he believed with equal firmness that baptism was absolutely necessary to the regeneration and salvation of every sinner. Hence, infants as well as adults must be baptized or they were condemned to an eternal hell if they died unbaptized. Later the Catholic church in mitigation of this horrible doctrine invented the limbo of infants, where unbaptized infants dying in infancy are restrained forever from the face of God but are not actually subjected to the pains of hell. Augustine knew of the idea but spurned it. To him the unbaptized infant dying in infancy was consigned to the torments of an awful and eternal hell, and it was on this basis that he worked out his justification of infant-baptism. The danger of death in infancy, still great in our day notwithstanding

the wonderful progress made in recent years in preventive medicine, was many times greater then. In view of this uncertainty it is not strange that Augustine, holding such views as he did concerning the religious status of the child, should have justified and also advocated the baptism of infants. It is worthy of serious attention that he is the first Christian, so far as the records go, who *advocated* its administration. Others had mentioned it, some had opposed it, some had tolerated or even justified it, but nobody so far as we know had advocated it. It had unquestionably risen, not from the advocacy of the clergy but instigated by the fears of the parents.

As belief in the power of baptism to remove the guilt and stain of all previous sins gradually established itself, it exercised two natural but contrary tendencies as to the time at which baptism should be administered. The earliest and at first the most pronounced tendency was to postpone baptism till the end of life. The Catholic church had not as yet worked out its elaborate system of ceremonies for the removal of sins committed after baptism, and so it was thought that baptism at the end of life was the only certain way which the church had for the removal of sin. Moreover, if one was so inclined he might indulge his propensities for sin throughout life and yet rest assured that all would be well in the end if only he postponed baptism until then. Against this ten-

dency the fathers of the third and following centuries protested continually, urging baptism on all at conversion or at the end of the usual period of catechetical instruction.

The other tendency due to the rise of belief in baptismal regeneration was to push baptism back to the very beginning of life, so as to escape the awful danger of seeing a child die unbaptized and so be eternally lost. The former tendency was the deliberate choice of adults for themselves, the latter was born of the fears of parents for their unconscious infants. Both tendencies are the offspring of the same perversion of the significance of baptism and both sprang from the people rather than the clergy. The clergy, so far as known, never advocated the postponement of baptism to the end of life; on the contrary, they vigorously and continuously opposed the tendency; and yet for a long while it threatened to establish itself as the usual practice. Infant-baptism, as we have seen in the preceding pages, was opposed by some of the clergy and some of the laity and doubted by many, but the danger of death constituted for parents of sickly children who believed that baptism was necessary to salvation, an overwhelming argument.

Augustine, as we have seen, becomes the first active advocate of infant-baptism. And yet even he reveals the fact that faith-baptism had been the earlier practice and that faith was still felt to be required. In arguing that infants are sinners, he cites the fact that the ritual used in

infant-baptism is the same as that used in administering faith-baptism, and that the infant (through its parents) is exorcised, confesses its sins, renounces the devil and avows its faith. But he goes further and squarely recognizes the great fundamental evangelical truth that faith is essential to baptism and salvation, frequently asserting that baptized infants must be counted in the number of believers and are actually so counted by the church (On Forgiveness of Sins and Baptism, Book I, 38 and often). Of course, when he begins to define and describe this infant faith he is compelled to juggle with words. He admits that the child was unconscious of repentance and the various acts ascribed to him by the sponsors, but he asserts nevertheless that they are unexperienced realities in the heart of the child. A few quotations will suffice to lay before the reader his views, in so far as such confused opinions can be set forth. Commenting on the words: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," he says: "Now the mystery of this believing in the case of infants is completely effected by the responses of the sureties by whom they are taken to baptism" (On the Soul, etc., Book II, chapter 17). "By the answer of those through whose agency they are born again, the Spirit of righteousness transfers to them that faith which, of their own will, they could not yet have" (On Forgiveness, etc., Book III, chapter 2). "In the case of infants, being baptized is to believe, and not being baptized is not to believe" (*Ib.* Book

I, chapter 40). "They belong among those who have believed; for this is obtained for them by virtue of the sacrament and the answer of the sponsors. . . . Such as are not baptized are reckoned among those who have not believed" (*Ib.* Book I, chapter 62). "They are rightly called believers, because they in a certain sense profess faith by the words of their parents . . . renounce the world by the profession again of the same parents. The whole of this is done in hope, in the strength of the sacrament and the divine grace which the Lord has bestowed upon the church. But who knows not that the baptized infant fails to be benefited from what he receives as a little child, if on coming to years of reason he fails to believe and to abstain from unlawful desires?" (*Ib.* Book I, chapter 25). Quotations to the same effect could be multiplied indefinitely, but one more must suffice. In a letter written in 408, in reply to a request from Boniface, bishop of Rome, for help in the solution of some of the more serious problems and doubts that had arisen in connection with the growing practice of infant-baptism, he says: "Believing is nothing else than having faith; and accordingly, when on behalf of an infant as yet incapable of exercising faith, the answer is given that he believes, this answer means that he has faith because of the sacrament of faith, and in like manner the answer is made that he turns to God because of the sacrament of conversion. . . . An infant, although he is not yet a believer in the sense of



having that faith which includes the consenting will of those who exercise it, nevertheless becomes a believer through the sacrament of that faith. For as it is answered that he believes, so also he is called a believer, not because he assents to the truth by an act of his own judgment, but because he receives the sacrament of that truth" (Letter XCVIII).

Augustine frequently acknowledges the existence of serious abuses in the practice and reveals the existence of opponents. The only scriptural authority which he can find is the assertion that baptism succeeds circumcision, a conception which had been rejected by his great high-church forerunner, Cyprian. He can point to no New Testament command or example, and can find no historical support earlier than Cyprian, though he asserts that it had come down by tradition from the apostles. But so powerful was his influence that the practice was never again seriously questioned in the Catholic church, and now rapidly became the accepted theory and practice of that body. Boniface, bishop of Rome, was the last prominent churchman to question it. For the future there were many questions connected with the practice to be settled, but the practice itself is unchallenged within the pale of the Catholic church. To oppose it was to put oneself outside that church and endanger life itself.

The subsidiary questions arising in the course of the centuries were usually settled in synods of the clergy. These meetings began to be held



about 150 A.D. Difficulties relating to baptism are often treated but infant-baptism is not mentioned in the acts of any synod before that of Carthage in 252 A.D., already mentioned in treating Cyprian. Constant references in the acts of later synods to the baptism of heathens and catechumens show that faith-baptism was the rule till well down in the fifth century. From that time onward infant-baptism is a subject of frequent consideration. The conclusions show steady advance in the practice and its demands. These will now be noticed.

A synod, held at Carthage in 418 in which some 200 bishops from Spain and from all the provinces of North Africa participated, anathematized any who said that new-born children did not need baptism (Hefele, *His. of the Councils*, II, 459). This synod did not *enjoin* the baptism of infants as a duty, but justified it as a practice on the ground of child need. It should be noted that this, like the former synod in which infant-baptism was considered, was held in Africa.

The first synod held outside of Africa which dealt with infant-baptism was held at Gerunda, in Spain, June 8, 517. Its position can be seen from the fourth and fifth canons: "Catechumens are to be baptized at Easter and Pentecost; only to the sick ones may baptism be administered at any time. When new-born children are sick, and have no appetite for the mother's milk, as is often the case, they should be baptized at once, on the same day" (Hefele, IV, 105). This is an illumi-

nating illustration, showing that infant-baptism was still the exception in this part of the world and that infant mortality was the great argument for the practice.

In the seventh century the clergy began the attempt to force all society into the Church through the now wide-open door of infant-baptism, and as a result came the demand that all infants be baptized under pain of punishment for neglect or refusal. The State began to lend its aid to the Church in this endeavor, assessing heavy fines on the recalcitrant. The first instance of this demand that has come down to us is that of King Ina of Wessex, in England. A large English synod held in 692 decreed as follows: "A child must be baptized within thirty days after its birth under penalty of thirty solidi. Should it die unbaptized it is atoned for with the entire property of its parents" (Hefele, III, 349). Similarly, a council was held at Paderborn under Charlemagne in 785 in which it was determined (canon 19): "Every one must have his child baptized within a year under penalty" (Hefele, III, 637). This rule was doubtless enforced by the great Frankish king all over his vast dominions, for he did not hesitate to compel adult Saxons to be baptized on their submission to him. Gradually it became the general practice of the Church and of Christian government to impose baptism on all infants, and faith-baptism almost ceased during two or three centuries.

The Church soon became conscious of some of the evils of infant-baptism; constantly lamenting its corruptions, but never once thinking of abandoning the practice. This feature of the history is also seen in the acts of several synods. In a great reform synod held at Paris at the command of the emperor in 829, it was declared (canon 6): "Formerly baptism was administered only to such as had already been instructed in the faith. Now, since all parents are Christian, it is otherwise; but it is a frightful neglect if those who were baptized as children are not later thoroughly instructed." Again, in canon 9, it is said: "It is very bad that many who were baptized as children do not later learn the true meaning of baptism, partly through their own fault, partly through the neglect of their pastors" (Hefele, IV, 59).

The baptism of all infants had now become the ideal of the Catholic church. If some remained unbaptized in nominally Christian lands it was due to an oversight or neglect of the priests. Parents were no longer permitted to determine whether their children should be baptized; both Church and State demanded it. Religious freedom was denied to both infants and parents. Infant-baptism was now doing its full and legitimate work. It crushed religious freedom, introduced the unregenerate into the Church, obliterated the distinction between the Church and the world, and banished evangelical religion and faith-baptism from the earth,

except as they could escape the lynx eyes of the Church and State. Its advocates were now prepared to fight with fire and sword and every other cruelty that fiendish ingenuity could invent, every effort to restore evangelical faith and the faith-baptism which the Lord commanded. Henceforth for centuries the advocates of faith-baptism must be prepared for the sufferings of the stake. Infant-baptism has ushered in the Dark Ages.

## CHAPTER VIII.

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### THE REFORMATION—MARTIN LUTHER.

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IN the preceding chapter we followed the history of infant-baptism to the point where both Church and State were enforcing it upon all parents under penalty. It is not necessary to follow the details of its history in the Catholic church during the Middle Ages. Suffice it to say that it became almost the sole kind of baptism practiced in so-called Christian lands, faith-baptisms being very rare and confined almost exclusively to the infrequent cases of the conversion of Jews. But there remained some consciousness of its evils and every effort at reform and revival of evangelical faith within the Catholic church called forth protests against infant-baptism.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find the question of its abolition raised very early in the history of the mighty movement in the interest of evangelical religion known as the Reformation. All the great reformers were compelled to face the question and take a stand, and it is safe to say that this question gave them more trouble than any other matter of internal policy. As early as 1521 some of Luther's followers began to express doubts as to the scripturalness and practical re-

sults of infant-baptism. Many of them discontinued its administration without, however, at once rebaptizing those who had been baptized in infancy.

Luther himself seems to have had little or no doubt as to the legitimacy of the practice. Whatever he may have thought about it from a scriptural standpoint, practical considerations would have led him to support its continuance firmly. It was a sacrament of the Church, deeply grounded in the social life and the religious faith of the people; it was the basis of the union of the Church with the State on whose support he was compelled to lean so hard in his struggle with the Catholic church; its rejection would have divided his forces and compelled him to rely on the power of the gospel alone. In short, its rejection would have wrecked his movement by its radical demands. From his viewpoint its retention was the only means of preserving unity and assuring success. Consequently he made short work of the Anabaptists who were jeopardizing the whole movement for reform by raising this dangerous question. Disdaining argument, he invoked the strong arm of the State for their suppression. Moreover, his view of the means of grace gave theological support to the importance and continuance of infant-baptism. His entire system was a strange jumble of evangelical and Catholic elements. The center of his theological system was justification by faith, which is of course the very foundation of evangelical

Christianity; but with the clear and forcible enunciation of this principle he combined a contradictory view of the means of grace. These are, according to him, the *Word* (that is the gospel message) and the *Sacraments* (baptism and the Supper.) It must not be forgotten that he was reared a Catholic, breaking away from that church only in middle life and never succeeding in gaining complete emancipation. This fact is seen most clearly in his view of baptism and the Supper which is in both cases very near to that of the Catholics. To him the glorified body and blood of Christ were as really present in the elements of bread and wine as to the Catholic; he differed only as to the mode of this presence. In like manner he taught the necessity of baptism as the divinely appointed means of regeneration as firmly as the Catholics themselves. He held that baptism is *water with the word*, the bath of regeneration, and absolutely necessary to salvation. This view of the necessity and efficacy of baptism was the basis for infant-baptism for him as it was for the Catholics. He strove to harmonize it with his great evangelical principle of justification by faith, but of course without success. The two principles are incompatible and irreconcilable. In his earlier years he seemed inclined to insist that unconscious infants when baptized had an unconscious faith, that baptism supplied faith, as Augustine had contended, or that the faith of the parents or of the Church was accepted in a vicarious way. And he apparently



never gave up the conviction that faith must be and is in some sense actually present in every baptized and saved person. But in his later life he showed some inclination to give up this juggling with words and admit frankly that faith is not necessary to salvation, thus falling back into the blank *opus operatum* view of the Catholic church. A few quotations from the more important Lutheran documents will make his views plain. In the "Shorter Catechism" composed by Luther in 1529, the most widely used means of religious instruction for children, it is said that baptism "effects the remission of sins, frees us from death and the devil, and gives blessedness everlasting to those who believe what the word and the promise of God declare." Faith of some kind is implied in this quotation and in all that is said in this catechism about baptism. In the "Greater Catechism," also composed in 1529 and designed for the instruction of the preachers, Luther says: "The whole force, work, necessity, fruit and end of baptism is to confer salvation . . . for through the Word it (the water) receives the power to become a washing of regeneration. . . . Nothing works in us but faith, but . . . faith must have something to believe, that is, to which it can cling, on which it can stand and rest. So faith clings to the water, and believes that baptism confers salvation and life, not through the water, but because it embodies God's Word and command, and because his name is attached to it. . . . Faith alone makes the person worthy

usefully to receive the wholesome and holy water. . . . It cannot be received unless we believe it from our hearts. It will avail us nothing without faith" (Luther's Primary Works, pp. 133f).

Such views would seem to render infant-baptism utterly out of the question; but not so. Luther is equal to the task of justifying infant-baptism on such a basis as this. He begins his discussion of the subject with this vigorous language: "There arises now a question with which the devil and his sects would confound the world: the question of the baptism of infants whether they can have faith and be properly baptized." He advises the "simple" to cast the question aside and leave it to those who are acquainted with the subject. He then argues (1) that infant-baptism must be pleasing to Christ who has honored and blessed so many that were baptized in infancy; (2) "that it is not of the utmost importance whether he who is baptized has faith or not, for this will not make the baptism wrong; everything depends on God's Word and command;" (3) "We bring the child in the belief and hope that it has faith, and pray God to give it faith; but we do not baptize it on this account, but solely because God has commanded it. . . . It is only foolish and presumptuous persons who argue and infer that, where there is no faith, the baptism cannot be right" (Primary Works, p. 138ff). Could anything illustrate the incompatibility of infant-baptism with the fundamental Lutheran tenet of justification by faith more

clearly and forcefully than these quotations, all taken from the "Greater Catechism"?

The Augsburg Confession was drawn up, chiefly by Melanchthon, in 1530, and presented by the Lutheran princes to the emperor and Diet at Augsburg as the explanation and justification of their views and actions. It has ever since been regarded as the foundation statement of Lutheran doctrine and practice. The article on baptism is brief and inconclusive, since that was not one of the subjects in dispute between Catholics and Lutherans. It is said that baptism "is necessary to salvation, and that by baptism the grace of God is offered, and that children are to be baptized, who by baptism, being offered to God, are received into God's favor. They condemn the Anabaptists who allow not the baptism of children, and affirm that children are saved without baptism."

These quotations will suffice to show how confused Luther was in his arguments for infant-baptism, notwithstanding the clearness and vigor with which he insisted on its practice. He held that there was no salvation apart from faith, but that baptism was necessary to salvation, and that infants were to be baptized. As to how these statements are to be reconciled he was in the fog. They are irreconcilable. Infant-baptism is not and cannot be a faith-baptism. It is a non-faith, involuntary and magical baptism in the usage of Luther equally as much as in that of the Catholics.

## CHAPTER IX.

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### THE REFORMATION—ZWINGLI AND CALVIN.

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THE second great character of the Reformation was Huldreich Zwingli, the reformer of German-speaking Switzerland. His views were reached independently of Luther in the course of his regular ministrations as pastor of the most important church in Zürich. In general he took a more biblical position than Luther, and his reform was in many respects far more radical than that of Luther. This was especially true of his views of baptism and the Supper. Much more consistently than Luther he held that justification is by faith and faith alone, and that all ceremonies as means of grace were abolished by Christ. To him the ordinances were only outward symbols of an inward grace, and had value for the spiritual life only as the inward meaning was apprehended through the outward symbolic act. This view would seem to make infant-baptism meaningless and even absurd. But he continued it while he was compelled to take a new position as to its significance and strike out a new line of argument in its support. It can be said with confidence, sustained by historical investigation, that Zwingli was the first writer in Christian history to advocate infant-baptism on other grounds than

its magical working on the infant. The Pelagians had said that it was necessary to introduce children into the kingdom, though it was not necessary to their salvation. All others down to Zwingli's day had held that it was necessary to salvation. Zwingli was in great doubt as to its retention for a time, and many of his followers believed that he was on the point of abandoning the practice altogether, as many of them did. But after a period of vacillation and uncertainty, apparently led by practical considerations relating to the reform movement, he decided to retain and defend the practice on the new basis made necessary by his general position as to the significance of the sacraments to which he denied saving efficacy.

Of baptism he said: "If the sacrament had been able to remove sin, Christ would not have been obliged to come in the flesh, but would have needed only to institute the sacrament." He is conscious that in this matter he "thinks differently from any other ancient or modern writer." Being unable with these views to defend infant-baptism on the old ground that it effected salvation he adopted as his line of defense the position that baptism succeeded circumcision and is therefore to be administered to Christian children on the same ground as circumcision was administered to Jewish children. It had its value, he held, in the fact that it is an act of consecration on the part of the parents, an act of obedience to divine command. Just as

Abraham and the Jews circumcised their children, thereby incorporating them into the covenant of grace with the people of God; so Christian parents are to baptize their children, who are as much children of God as themselves, thereby incorporating them into the covenant of Christian grace among the people of God. The covenant is exactly the same in both the old and the new dispensations; only the signs of the covenants differ. Christians, as a sort of race, succeed to the Jews as the people of God, and baptism succeeds to circumcision as the sign of that relation. As a result of these views the contention is advanced for the first time in Christian history that only the children of Christian parents are to be baptized. This fact shows how completely the ground for the defense of infant-baptism has been changed, and also how exactly in the mind of Zwingli the old covenant is perpetuated in Christianity.

Baptism, according to him, introduced infants into the outer church only, not into the true spiritual church of the redeemed. That could be accomplished only by the exercise of personal faith when the child came to years. He thus introduced a sort of double church membership, a *quasi* membership for children who had not reached maturity, and a real, full membership for those who had been converted. Nothing like this had hitherto existed in Christian history.

Unlike the other reformers, Zwingli was strongly inclined to believe that all infants dying



in infancy were of the elect and therefore saved without baptism. This view introduced further confusion into his doctrine of infant-baptism and weakened the sense of its need. Nevertheless, he maintained that it had much practical value in impressing upon parents their religious obligations to their children and upon pastors their obligations to the children of their parishes. Zwingli thus finally brought himself, after considerable struggle, to believe that infant-baptism was not anti-scriptural and hurtful but scriptural and of material practical value. However, he was never bold enough to claim, as some of its modern advocates do, that he could cite any scriptural command for or example of infant-baptism. His views can be seen from this quotation taken from his "Refutation of Anabaptist Tricks" (page 236), where he says: "As the Hebrews' children, because they with their parents were under the covenant, merited the sign of the covenant, so also Christians' infants, because they are covenanted within the church and people of Christ, ought in no way to be deprived of baptism, the sign of the covenant" (Jackson, *Selections*, etc.).

Zwingli is an important character in the history of infant-baptism. Before him it had, with slight modifications by the Pelagians, always been regarded as possessing magical saving power, effecting the regeneration and salvation of the morally unconscious infant. This view is utterly subversive of evangelical Christianity as



is obvious on a moment's consideration, and as is also shown by the history of the bodies that hold this position. Zwingli stripped infant-baptism of its magical power, insisting that the child is not regenerated by baptism, but must be converted through the exercise of saving faith in future years, its relation to the Church being exceptional until that time. Moreover, he greatly limited its application by insisting that only the children of Christian parents are to be baptized. He thus laid the foundation for a church of converted members with the retention of infant-baptism as a sort of dedicatory service. In his hands infant-baptism became something totally different from anything it had ever before been. It was now little more than a ceremony of dedication, without any effect on the child except as it was supposed to secure for him more careful religious training by parents and pastors. Evangelical pedobaptists owe him a debt of gratitude of incalculable greatness. He took a ceremony that had grown up as an integral part of the Catholic system, still the vehicle of the very essence of that system, and so modified it that it could be retained without utterly subverting the evangelical principle.

#### CALVIN.

John Calvin, the founder of the Calvinistic "Reformed" and Presbyterian churches of the world, was the third great character of the Reformation. His views of baptism and the Supper are very difficult to comprehend, but in general it may be

said that he held a position between those of Luther and Zwingli. He believed that baptism promoted our faith toward God and testified our faith before men. It was "to be received as from the hand of the Author himself," and when so received it promoted faith in three ways: (1) It served as a seal and assurance that "all our sins are cancelled, effaced and obliterated, so that they will never appear in his sight, or come into his remembrance, or be imputed to us." (2) It "is the certain testimony" "that we are not only ingrafted into the life and death of Christ, but are so united as to be partakers of all his benefits." (3) "It shows us our mortification in Christ, and our new life in him." Baptism does not confer these great blessings, but it is God's method of assuring us that he has conferred them as a result of our faith. It is a "seal, not to give efficacy to the promise of God as if it wanted validity in itself, but only to confirm it to us." But "baptism also serves for our confession before men. For it is a mark by which we openly profess our desire to be numbered among the people of God, by which we testify our agreement with all Christians in the worship of one God, and in one religion, and by which we make a public declaration of our faith." However, it must never be forgotten that in baptism "we obtain nothing except what we receive by faith. If faith is wanting, it will be a testimony of our ingratitude, to render us guilty before God, because we have not believed the promise given in the sacrament."

These are his general views on baptism as stated in his chapter on baptism in the Institutes (Book IV, chapter XV). No advocate of faith-baptism could state the necessity of faith more clearly and strongly. Beyond controversy these principles, fairly interpreted, nullified infant-baptism, because the infant at the time of its baptism has and can have no faith. The faith of the infant is neither promoted toward God nor confessed before men in baptism, for the very simple and sufficient reason that it can have no faith, as Calvin himself admits. The most that he can say is that the faith of the child, if in future years it shall exercise faith, will be promoted toward God and confessed before men by the baptism that it received in unconsciousness, when it had no faith. This is curious reasoning. Let it be repeated that Calvin's principles logically abolish infant-baptism.

And yet Calvin seems never to have been in doubt about the scripturalness and propriety of infant-baptism. Like Zwingli, he denied that infants are regenerated in baptism or that baptism is necessary to the salvation of elect infants dying in infancy. "Infants are not excluded from the kingdom of heaven who happen to die before they have had the privilege of baptism." On this ground he opposed private baptism and its administration by laymen or women. Like Zwingli, also, he based his main defense of infant-baptism on the claim that it succeeded to circumcision. This argument he buttressed by the

fact that Jesus said: "Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Only the children of believing parents are thus to be baptized; they "thus are received into the Church by a solemn sign, because they already belonged to the body of Christ by virtue of the promise."

His chapter on infant-baptism is long and labored (Institutes, Book IV, chapter XVI). The genius of Calvin was not equal to the task of harmonizing this practice with the fundamental principles which he had laid down in the preceding chapter. He admits, of course, that there is no mention of infant-baptism in the Scriptures nor any express command to administer it. However, he believes it benefits the parents by giving them the assurance that their children are the heirs of the promises and the objects of God's grace, while the children are benefited by being brought into closer relations with the Church. In their maturity, he claimed, this baptism acted as a powerful stimulus to piety; it is a baptism "into future repentance and faith." "They will hence be the more inflamed to the pursuit of that renovation, with the token of which they find themselves to have been favored in their earliest infancy." Infant-baptism was essential to the system of state church to which Calvin clung, and hence it was retained, notwithstanding its subversion of the fundamental views of baptism which he held and stated with such clearness in other connections.

## CHAPTER X.

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### REFORMATION AND REVIVAL IN ENGLAND.

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IN England the Reformation was never so thorough and radical as on the continent. Moreover, the earliest reformatory influence was Lutheran. Hence, the English state church was less removed from the position of the Catholics in its view of the sacraments than the other Protestant bodies. It held firmly to the position that baptism is the sacrament of regeneration, and necessary to salvation. The article on baptism in the XXXIX Articles states that baptism is "a sign of regeneration or new birth, whereby as by an instrument, they that receive baptism rightly are grafted into the church; the promises of the forgiveness of sin, and our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed; faith is confirmed, and grace increased by virtue of prayer unto God." This confession was drawn up under Calvinistic influence and is not so clearly in favor of baptismal regeneration as the Prayer-Book which is far more Catholic in its implications of doctrine. In the ritual of baptism it is steadily assumed that regeneration is effected by baptism. After the baptismal service the priest is made to say: "We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father,

that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this infant with thy Holy Spirit, to receive him for thy own child by adoption, and to incorporate him into thy holy congregation."

There is no assumption that the child has faith as in the case of the Lutherans. And yet the ritual which is used was produced for the baptism of believers and assumes the existence of faith in the recipient of baptism. The infant is asked: "Dost thou forsake the devil and all his works?" and the godparents answer in the name of the child: "I forsake them all." "Dost thou believe in God the Father almighty, etc.?" The godparents answer: "All this I steadfastly believe." And so on throughout the service. Faith is everywhere implied.

In the Anglican Catechism the child is asked: "What is required of persons to be baptized?" Answer: "Repentance, whereby they forsake sin; and faith, whereby they steadfastly believe the promises of God made to them in the sacrament." Ques.: "Why, then, are infants baptized, when by reason of their tender age they cannot perform them?" Ans.: "Because they promise them both by their sureties; which promise, when they come to age, themselves are bound to perform."

These quotations are sufficient to show that the ritual used for infant-baptism by this church, even down to the present time, was wrought out for the administration of faith-baptism. It is inconsistent with the condition of the infant and puts baptism on a wholly artificial basis. Nothing per-



haps shows more convincingly that the early Church practiced faith-baptism than the old liturgies of baptism, all of which presuppose genuine repentance and faith.

While the Anglican church is thus committed to the doctrine of baptismal regeneration as the basis for the practice of infant-baptism, it was far otherwise with the English and American Congregationalists. Calvinism under the name of Puritanism made a deep impression on English Christianity during the latter half of the sixteenth century. Out of this party came the Congregationalists. Convinced that the reform of the English church was hopeless, Robert Browne, the founder of Congregationalism, decided to leave it altogether, abandon the ideal of a state church which should include within its folds all Englishmen, and set up an independent body composed of believers only. These were to be bound together by the voluntary acceptance of a covenant. He thus revived in England the idea that the church is not coterminous with society but is a distinct body within the social order, into which the individual enters voluntarily by the conscious and express acceptance of the ideals and duties agreed upon by the body. This meant, of course, the complete separation of Church and State and the exclusion of the idea of infant church membership of even a *quasi* nature. The supposed necessity for perpetuating the union between Church and State had undoubtedly been one of the deci-



sive factors in the retention of infant-baptism by the Reformers, and now this union was declared to be bad and only bad by Browne. Could he retain infant-baptism? Well, he did, but was compelled to modify further its significance and defense. He did not regard the ceremony as having any saving significance, nor did he assume any faith in the child. It now becomes solely a dedicatory service in which the child is dedicated to God and the church. It is no longer based on natural descent, as in Calvinism, or on Christian parentage, as with Zwingli, but on the basis of legal control over and moral and religious responsibility for the child. Consequently it is not to be limited to the children of Christian parents, but is to be extended to these and to all others who are under the control of Christian men and women, such as servants and wards. The Christian man is obligated to dedicate to God by baptism all children for whom he is responsible.

Browne says: "The children of the faithful, though they be infants, are to be offered to God and the Church, that they may be baptized. Also those infants or children which are of the household of the faithful, and under their full power." And in the Confession of 1596 it is said "that such as be of the seed, or under the government of any of the Church, be even in their infancy received to baptism, and made partakers of the sign of God's covenant made with the faithful and their seed throughout all generations." Thus Browne and his followers laid the founda-

tion for the retention of infant-baptism in a country where there is religious freedom under the voluntary system as in the United States. He is an important figure in the history of infant-baptism in that he relieved it of one more of the evils that had clung to it from the start and made it somewhat more consonant with evangelical Christianity. This has been the chief line of development among evangelical pedobaptists from that time to the present hour. They owe their ability to preserve infant-baptism along with evangelical Christianity principally to Zwingli and Browne.

It might have been expected that the great evangelical revival of the eighteenth century, would, on account of its strong emphasis on conversion and religious experience, have abandoned infant-baptism altogether, which, as we have seen, is historically and logically inconsistent with this view of the Christian religion. And it did result in a tremendous growth of anti-pedobaptist sentiment as we shall see later. But the organized revival under the leadership of the Wesleys clung to infant-baptism. The failure of Wesley to break with this practice, which was so alien to his fundamental ideas, was doubtless due to the influence which the English church exercised over him in this as in other respects. His father was a rector in that church, and John strove to remain a consistent member of the body till his death. He organized his converts into "societies" (not "churches") within the English church and apparently never intended to organize a sepa-

rate "church." His liturgy and creed were only modifications of those used by the English church. In fact, while his evangelical warmth came from the Moravians and his organization was the product of his own genius acting amid the exigencies of the situation, his ecclesiastical views remained to the end of his life predominantly Anglican. It is not particularly surprising, therefore, to find him, along with his powerful emphasis on religious experience, retaining infant-baptism because of its ecclesiastical significance.

In his "Treatise on Baptism," written in 1756, he maintains that infants are to be baptized on the following grounds: (1) Infants are stained with original sin, and are "children of wrath, and liable to eternal damnation;" therefore, "infants need to be washed from original sin," "seeing in the ordinary way, they cannot be saved unless this be washed away by baptism." Baptism is not held to be absolutely the only way an infant can be saved, as the Catholics and most Anglicans held, but it is regarded by him as the "ordinary" way to which we (though not God) are bound. He holds that this view "is agreeable to the unanimous judgment of the ancient fathers." (2) "By baptism we enter into covenant with God; into that everlasting covenant, which he hath commanded forever." Just as circumcision was the seal of the covenant with Abraham and was administered to children, so baptism is the seal of the same covenant now and is therefore to be administered to children. The covenant was

exactly the same under the two dispensations, an everlasting covenant, only the form of the seal being different. (3) "By baptism we are admitted into the church, and consequently made members of Christ, its head." Infants ought to come to Christ (Matt. 19: 13f), "but they cannot now come to him, unless by being brought into the church; which cannot be but by baptism." "Even under the Old Testament they were admitted into it by circumcision. And can we suppose they are in a worse condition under the gospel, than they were under the law?" (4) "The apostles baptized infants;" this was argued from the alleged practice of the Jews who, it was claimed, both circumcised and baptized the infants of proselytes. (5) "To baptize infants has been the general practice of the Christian church, in all places and in all ages."

True to the confused nature of the Anglican church and the diverse origins of the various elements of the Methodist movement, Wesley here jumbles together reasons which are incompatible with each other and makes the absurd statement that the Christian church had universally practiced infant-baptism. Fortunately for the world his religious experience was far better than his Anglican traditions and his knowledge of Christian history, so that both he and his followers relegated infant-baptism to a relatively unimportant place in the plan of salvation and continued to preach evangelical religion with clearness and power notwithstanding their retention of infant-baptism.

While the Protestants were thus seeking to defend and explain the old Catholic practice of infant-baptism so that it would not nullify their doctrines of "the sole authority of Scripture" and "justification by faith alone," the two great Catholic churches continued to hold firmly and consistently to the practice of infant-baptism on the old original ground that it was necessary to salvation and that unconscious infants were regenerated in the act. At the Council of Trent in 1545 it was decreed for the Roman Catholic church (Canon V, on Baptism): "If any saith that baptism is free, that is, not necessary unto salvation: let him be anathema."

The Greek Catholic church expressed its faith in "The Orthodox Confession of the Catholic and Apostolic Eastern Church" in 1643. In *Qæstio CIII*, on the nature and fruit of baptism, it is said that it "abolishes all sins, in infants original sin, in adults both that and voluntary sin."

This hurried sketch of infant-baptism in the period of the Reformation and the two subsequent centuries, will suffice to show the various ways in which the majority of those who broke away from the Catholic church endeavored to justify and explain this Catholic practice which they retained. Some of them gave it a different significance and invented new arguments in its support, but could not see their way to abandon it, notwithstanding the great embarrassment it caused them. It had become too firmly rooted in the social, political and religious life of Europe

to be abolished by the religious cataclysm of the Reformation, the most tremendous effort for the recovery of evangelical religion since its gradual obscuration in the early centuries of the Christian era. Whole nations deserted the Catholic church while they preserved this Catholic practice; great theologians sought by analogy and inference to defend it from the silent pages of Scripture and harmonize it with the evangelical principles which they preached; the civil arm was called in to enforce the baptism of infants and to burn, drown and destroy the simple people whose piety could find no place for this practice. It is a pitiable picture; but its abandonment would have wrecked the idea of national churches, would have automatically worked a separation of Church and State, would have emancipated the individual from servitude to the institution, would have established religious freedom with a cessation of bloody persecutions, and would have placed evangelical religion on a sure and permanent foundation. The Protestant principles legitimately involve these precious fruits, but they were negatived by the retention of infant-baptism. Protestants preserved the union between Church and State even as the Catholics, with only slight variations as to ideals; they persecuted only less bitterly than the Catholics. Not a single pedobaptist communion of the sixteenth century is free from the blood of Christian martyrs. The opponents of infant-baptism were cast out as evil and paid for their faithfulness to conscience with their blood.



## CHAPTER XI.

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### GROWTH OF ANTI-PEDOBAPTIST SENTIMENT.

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It seems probable that opposition to infant-baptism had never entirely ceased since the beginning of the practice at the end of the second century. Individuals who opposed infant-baptism as repugnant to Scripture and the fundamentals of the gospel, appeared at intervals throughout Christian history and attained sufficient prominence to leave some mark on Christian literature. Besides these more prominent and significant opponents of pedobaptism there must have been many simpler people who, under the influence of their experience of grace and such knowledge of the Scripture as they could obtain, quietly neglected the practice or openly opposed it without arousing sufficient ecclesiastical controversy to leave any marks in the literature of the time. But whatever may be the facts as to the existence of opposition to this practice in the darkest period of the Middle Ages it is a fact beyond the possibility of contradiction that determined opposition reappears as soon as the great revival of religion and culture begins and the Bible is once more in the language of the people. For centuries during the Middle Ages the Bible was



almost unknown to the masses of the people of Western Europe. In the early centuries it had been loved and trusted and had been translated into the languages of the peoples among whom Christianity spread. It was thus found in entirety or in part in Greek, Latin, Syriac, Coptic and Gothic by the end of the fourth century. But as the Christian world drifted away from its scriptural moorings and the idea of ecclesiastical authority replaced that of the Bible, the Book fell into disuse and finally into disfavor as a book to be entrusted to the people. At the same time the old Græco-Roman culture was rapidly dying out and leaving Western Europe in almost total intellectual darkness. The Goths were amalgamated with the earlier inhabitants of southwestern Europe and their language disappeared. Spoken Latin gradually changed into Italian, French, Spanish and Portuguese till the old Latin into which the Bible had been translated was no longer understood by the masses of the people. No new translations were made for several centuries after the days of Jerome, leaving the Bible securely locked in the vaults of a dead language which could be opened only by the learned. Thus through fear of its effects and the ignorance of the people the Bible was practically taken away from them. The Church was left to continue its drift even more rapidly and to work its utmost effects on the people who were now wholly dependent on it for their religious instruction without possessing any standard by which they could

test or check its teachings or practices. The Bible has always been the bulwark of faith-baptism, and it is not strange, therefore, that we hear little of faith-baptism while the Bible is so nearly an unknown book.

But as the terrible German tribes whose barbarism had done so much to bring on the Dark Ages settled down and established some political and social organization, culture began to revive on the old classical soil and the Germans themselves began to accept the culture and religion of their dependents. *Vincti victores* again. One of the first things which this new culture undertook was the translation of the Scriptures. Parts were put into the Gothic in the fourth century and into Anglo-Saxon as early as the eighth century. The work of translating continued at intervals until the Bible in whole or in part existed in most of the languages of Western Europe even before the Reformation. Its circulation was very limited, however, and its influence not great.

The great revival which began in Western Europe in the eleventh century almost immediately produced sects in opposition to more or less of the doctrines and practices of the Catholic church. Among other things several of them opposed infant-baptism. This was true of some of the Waldenses, at least in the earlier years of their history. Likewise many of the Petrobrusians and Henricans were determined opponents and suffered for their convictions. But the Catholic church was able to suppress these movements

in large measure before the Reformation through the use of the Inquisition and the power of the civil arm. Anti-pedobaptism was largely destroyed at the stake.

With the revival of culture and the translation of the Scriptures in the fifteenth century there came a revival of religion, and these forces soon developed opposition to infant-baptism. We have already seen these sentiments among several of the more evangelical sects of the later Middle Ages. It did not, however, become sufficiently prominent in their systems to dominate and give name to them. Nevertheless it was the beginning in modern times of the serious and successful opposition to pedobaptism which has continued to grow with the growth of religious freedom, culture, Bible knowledge and evangelical activity down to the present hour. Faith-baptism is not a baptism of the darkness and ignorance of the Middle Ages, but of the light and freedom of Bible days and modern times. The period of triumph for infant-baptism was the depths of the Middle Ages when thick darkness covered the peoples, liberty was gone and the Bible was an almost unknown book. With the return of light anti-pedobaptism revived and has continued to grow. These indisputable facts are very gratifying to anti-pedobaptists, stimulating the hope that evangelical pedobaptists will all finally abandon this anti-evangelical, Catholic practice, and restore faith-baptism as the Lord and his apostles commanded it.

The Reformation was accompanied by a great outburst of anti-pedobaptist sentiment which all the churches were unable to suppress. This great religious revival seemed to call it forth simultaneously at several points in Europe, while the earliest centers were naturally Wittenberg and Zürich where Luther and Zwingli worked. Around these two great leaders and among their followers powerful anti-pedobaptist movements quickly developed. At Wittenberg two of the professors in the University in which Luther was himself a professor embraced these views and were driven from their positions; a good many pastors and thousands upon thousands of the German people lost faith in infant-baptism and advocated its abandonment. Luther and other leaders proceeded to the most energetic measures and finally called in the civil arm to suppress the (to them) dangerous movement. Tens of thousands of anti-pedobaptists perished in Germany during the ten years from 1525 to 1535. In Germany the movement was largely suppressed.

Around Zwingli and among his friends and supporters in Switzerland and South Germany there developed an even stronger anti-pedobaptist movement. Scholars and university-bred men like Felix Manz, Conrad Grebel, Ludwig Hätzer, John Denck and Balthaser Hubmaier, priests and monks and a great host of the laity, renounced the baptism they had received in their infancy and obtained a faith-baptism. They made an excellent translation of the Prophets from the Hebrew

into the German; they organized churches on the basis of faith-baptism and established a very active itinerant ministry for the propagation of their views. The movement began its separate organized existence the latter part of 1524 and spread swiftly to all those parts of Germany, Switzerland, Austria and the Netherlands in which the Reformation had been accepted. Even the far-away Scandinavian countries and a little later England and Scotland felt the impact of the movement. So powerful was it for a few years that almost every Reformer of any prominence or ability entered the theological lists against these advocates of faith-baptism whom they dubbed Anabaptists or Wiedertäufer, that is, rebaptizers. A flood of polemical pamphlets poured from the presses of Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands and all the great Confessions of Faith drawn up in this period condemn Anabaptism expressly or by direct implication. Soon civil governments were induced to intervene in an effort to suppress the movement by force; thousands suffered martyrdom by fire, sword and drowning, and thousands more were left to rot and die in the noisome prisons of that time. Thus the most promising anti-pedobaptist movement since the appearance of infant-baptism was virtually extinguished in blood. Anabaptists continued to exist, it is true, hidden away in the remote villages of various lands; but the world had been so bitterly prejudiced against them as to condemn their message unheard; moreover the sufferings

through which they had passed had shorn them of their leaders and their power. They lost their aggressive spirit; retired into the safety of obscurity and inactivity and ceased to be of any force in the world. They never entirely disappeared from Switzerland and the Netherlands, but they dwindled into a small sect that was tolerated because of its insignificance.

And what were the views of this sect which was so much hated and feared by both State and Church? Religiously they were striving for the freedom and autonomy of the individual soul and the purity and spiritual power of each individual church,—a church of redeemed people, saints, living holy lives, and associated together by their own choice, on the basis of a common faith, for the spread and establishment of the kingdom of God. The symbol and seal of these spiritual treasures was faith-baptism, accepted freely by each soul as a testimonial of its own faith and its own self-consecration to the cause of Christ. They opposed infant-baptism as the invention of men, a perversion of Scripture, the bulwark of Anti-Christ, the chief cornerstone of the papacy with all its errors, a necessary link in the union of Church and State, the foundation principle in religious persecutions and the nullification of evangelical Christianity. They argued against it chiefly from Scripture, not only denying the existence of biblical precept or example for the practice, but also asserting that it contravened essential scriptural principles. Around infant-baptism the whole con-



troversy raged; but behind the baptismal controversy lay deeper things which gave to the controversy its significance. The nature of the Christian religion itself and the relation of the Church to the individual soul and to all society were involved; the freedom of the soul was at stake.

In addition to their religious views the Anabaptists advocated certain social, political and economic doctrines which were regarded as dangerous to the whole social order. They admitted that the State was ordained of God, but held that it was a necessary evil organized because of the sinfulness of man. For this and other reasons they denied that any Christian man could hold civil office; they refused to take the oath for any purpose; they opposed war and refused to pay war taxes or bear arms; they objected to capital punishment and did not allow their members to engage in the liquor business; some of them advocated community of goods and opposed the lending of money on interest. They denied to the State the power to punish any but civil offenses, reserving for church discipline, which they administered very strictly, all purely moral and religious offenses. They contended that the Church should have complete autonomy in all religious matters and that the State has no religious duties, it being in their conception a purely secular body. The State should neither support nor control the Church. In a word, they advocated religious freedom in every sense of the word. They struggled to introduce the voluntary system as the most



advanced nations of earth are introducing it to-day. Their chief crime against society was that they were several centuries ahead of their generation. They attained this distinction by going back frankly and fully to the eternal spiritual principles of the gospel as revealed in the New Testament.

Under the stress of persecution some of the more ignorant and radical ran into wild fanaticism and even moral excesses, which brought deep reproach on the whole cause. The most flagrant case of this kind was that of Münster when in 1535 the Anabaptists gained control of the city and fell into such excesses as to make them a stench in the nostrils of all Europe. But that fanaticism and license are not logical fruits of their views, as was then maintained, has been shown by the whole history of religious freedom in the United States and elsewhere.

But the evil was done, the party was discredited and on the decline; the forces opposed to the scriptural principles lying at the base of faith-baptism were too strong to yield. They could not wholly exterminate anti-pedobaptism, but they did isolate, nullify and render it negligible.

From the continent the anti-pedobaptist movement was soon transplanted to England. Here it met much the same treatment as on the continent. Henry VIII and his successors proceeded against it vigorously and ruthlessly. In the early days of its history in England it seems to have been found among foreigners altogether, and it

did not affect the English people until they were aroused by the Puritan controversy of the last half of the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth centuries. Some of the peculiar social, religious, political and economic views it had held on the continent were then abandoned and what is ordinarily known as the English Baptist movement emerged from it about 1611. It was still known as Anabaptism and was bitterly persecuted till Cromwell's regime brought a measure of religious freedom to England. It then grew very rapidly and by the end of the century there were more than a hundred churches and several thousand members. This growth they had achieved in little more than a half century under the pressure of continuous persecution except during the brief period of Cromwell's power. Moreover they were themselves divided into two warring parties, one of which embraced the Calvinistic and the other the Arminian system of theology. In other respects they were fairly harmonious in faith and practice. They were called Anabaptists by their opponents, but usually called themselves "brethren" and their churches simply "churches of Christ" or "baptized churches of Christ."

When persecution ceased in 1689 the probabilities of rapid expansion seemed great. Freedom from the oppressive hand of the State had not been enjoyed by those who cherished antipedobaptist sentiments for centuries, and freedom was apparently the one thing necessary for growth. But they soon felt the chill of the ra-

tionalism of the eighteenth century. Spiritual coldness and deadness seized them, activity largely ceased, an excessive interest in the purely intellectual side of Christianity developed. Most of the Arminian wing became Unitarian and the others became hyper-Calvinists. Naturally growth ceased. They were probably not so numerous at the middle of the eighteenth century as they had been at the beginning.

In the meantime the prefix "Ana" was being gradually dropped from the name, and they began to be known simply as Baptists. By the year 1800 the term "Anabaptist" had almost disappeared from use both in England and America. Before this time the Baptists had begun to feel the refreshing effects of the great evangelical revival. The Arminians were largely saved from their Unitarianism and the Calvinists from their rigid hyper-Calvinism and antinomianism. The period of prosperity was at hand.

In America anti-pedobaptist sentiments made themselves manifest early in the history of the English settlements in Massachusetts. Roger Williams and others began the agitation of the question in the thirties of the seventeenth century and by 1639 had been banished from Massachusetts and had established a colony and an anti-pedobaptist church in Rhode Island. They were immediately dubbed "Anabaptists" and all the stigma that had attached to them in the Old World was transferred to the New. From this center they spread by degrees throughout all the

English colonies, meeting suspicion and obloquy everywhere and at places, notably in Massachusetts and Virginia, suffering severe persecution.

The growth and vicissitudes of anti-pedobaptists in this country were in general parallel with their history in the mother country. During the eighteenth century they met powerful opposition and suffered from the prevalent spiritual decline. But during this time they sloughed off the name "Anabaptist" and began to respond to the blessed influence of the Great Awakening which was now sweeping over the country. They had suffered from the spirit of division and isolation, and their growth had been very slow. By 1790 there were perhaps a hundred thousand, but they, too, were now standing on the threshold of their period of prosperity.

## CHAPTER XII.

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### THE CHILD AND THE KINGDOM—THE NEW PELAGIANISM.

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INFANT-BAPTISM is still practiced and tenderly cherished by the great mass of the Christian world. In those countries where the union between Church and State is still intact—states like Russia, Germany and Austria,—the practice of infant-baptism is almost universal. The Greek and the Roman Catholic churches in all lands where they exist still insist that baptism is absolutely necessary to salvation. On this ground they baptize all infants, lest dying in infancy they be barred from the vision of the face of God forever and be confined in the limbo prepared for unbaptized infants who die in infancy. Many, if not a majority of the Lutherans in all lands continue to baptize infants for the same reason, the regenerating power of baptism. The ritualistic wing of the Anglican or Episcopal church likewise believes in baptismal regeneration, and practices infant-baptism for this reason. All these churches continue infant-baptism on its original basis, that is, its magical regenerating effects on the unconscious infant. As we have seen in the preceding chapters this was the sole recognized ground for the practice down to the Reformation. These churches do not consider any religious experience

a "conversion," but only an "awakening." They hold that the child was regenerated in its baptism, needing thereafter only instruction and direction.

On the other hand, evangelical pedobaptists—Presbyterians, "Reformed," Congregationalists, Methodists and a few minor parties—have become more evangelical in this last period. Most of them insist on conversion through the exercise of repentance and a living faith. This religious experience must precede the beginning of real church membership. Baptized infants hold a wholly ambiguous and uncertain position in relation to church membership, undefined and indefinable. Infant-baptism is continued as a social custom while the actual religious life of the individual is begun and fostered much as among the anti-pedobaptists. It still nullifies faith-baptism and prevents its members from obeying the plain command of Christ to everyone that believes, the command to be baptized.

Quite recently the whole question has taken on a new form. Within the last dozen or fifteen years there has occurred a marked revival of the old Pelagian conception of the child. Pelagius and his supporters in the fifth and sixth centuries contended that the new-born babe was absolutely innocent and unpolluted by sin, that its nature was untainted by inheritance from its ancestors, but pure like that of Adam before the fall; in short, that actual sin was due to environment and in no sense or degree to heredity. He admitted that human beings fall into sin as they

advance in life, but affirmed that this tragic fact was due to imitation of their elders and not to any evil tendencies within themselves. These views precipitated a long and tedious controversy which resulted in their repudiation by the Christian world almost unanimously. They were felt to be false to the testimony of experience and the teachings of Scripture and to be dangerous in their practical tendencies. Even the great upheaval of the Reformation did not stimulate any serious revival of this discarded conception of child nature. Lutheranism, Calvinism and Arminianism, while differing widely on many points, were agreed as to the presence of some taint of sin in all human beings. They believed that human nature was poisoned at its roots in Adam. However much Christian thinkers might differ as to details, they were a unit in the conviction that Scripture, Christian experience and the universality of sin in adults made inescapable the conclusion that the child, at birth, is somehow and in some degree tainted or weakened or corrupted by sin.

But toward the end of the nineteenth century the Christian world suddenly became conscious of its surpassing excellencies. Human nature, it was contended, is not so bad as the pessimistic old theologians conceived it. The doctrine of the fatherhood of God was emphasized as never before, the doctrines of the atonement and redemption were ~~minimized~~ and relegated to the



scrapheap of the outworn, the death on Calvary was no longer regarded as sacrificial. These and related views, resting on an exceedingly shallow view of human nature, became widely current. It was inevitable that the older conception of the nature of the child should be affected. Turning away from the findings of the older theology and even from the teachings of Scripture, men in whom this tendency was strong found their chief support in the supposed conclusions of science. Biology and physiology discovered that the child, in its embryonic and infantile state and development, was remarkably like the other vertebrates; was, in fact, an animal. Child psychology penetrated, or claimed to penetrate, the child soul and there found nothing either good or bad. In a word, science could find no trace of sin in the child's soul or body, and hence concluded that there could be no taint of sin there. Such was the argument, or at least the course of reasoning, pursued by many advocates of the sinlessness of the infant. The fact that all children eventually become sinners if they grow to maturity gave the new Pelagians some pause, but this difficulty was surmounted in one way or another. Hence followed the bold assumption and contention that all children, being innocent and untainted by sin, children of God at birth, are to be baptized on the basis of this supposedly sinless state. They are in the kingdom, need no conversion or regeneration. The

task of parents is not to bring them to a saving knowledge of God in Christ Jesus, for they need no salvation; their task is rather to keep the child from falling out of the kingdom of God, of which each was a member when he was born into the world.

These views, current chiefly among the Congregationalists and Methodists, but not entirely wanting in several other denominations, have found more or less full and clear expression in a number of works on child nature and religion in the last few years. One of the frankest and clearest popular statements appeared in a booklet by Dr. John T. McFarland, bearing the title, "Preservation versus The Rescue of the Child." On account of his prominence and representative position in the Northern Methodist church he is here quoted at some length. The excerpts from this little work will make his views perfectly clear. He says, on page 8: "The child begins life as a child of God. . . . The child is the only thing which Jesus ever held up as a sample of the kingdom." Again, on page 13, he says: "The child begins life as a child of God. . . . The child does not require to be rescued. The child does not need to be brought back into the kingdom, because the child is already in the kingdom. The great responsibility and the great duty of the church, consequently, is not the *rescue* of little children, but their *preservation*. They are in the kingdom; our business is to see

that they remain in the kingdom. . . . We should impress it upon children in the beginning of their lives that they belong to the heavenly Father's house, and that the wisest thing which they can do is to remain contentedly, obediently, and happily in that house."

A slightly different but closely related view of the child's nature is found in the baptismal ritual of the Southern Methodist church. It reads as follows: "Dearly beloved, forasmuch as all men, though fallen in Adam, are born into this world in Christ the Redeemer, heirs of life eternal, subjects of the saving grace of the Holy Spirit,"\* etc. Here the conception is not that the child is born free from the contamination of original sin, but that it is born redeemed and saved.

Views very similar to the last exist among Presbyterians, except that they limit the benefits of Christ's death to the children of believing parents. For example, it is said in a book circulated by the Westminster Press, presumably with the endorsement of the Northern Presbyterian church: "The children of believers are to be treated as regenerate,"\*\* that is, at their natural birth. Again it is said, "Not only is the regeneration from earliest infancy of the children of believers *possible* and *credible*, but Scripture

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\*Doctrine and Discipline, p. 537, quoted by Weaver, Religious Development of the Child, p. 63.

\*\*White, Why Infants are Baptized, p. 45.

expressions encourage us to expect it. . . . *Facts in the Church* favor the belief that the children of believers are to be presumed regenerate till the contrary appears.\*

These quotations are sufficient to set forth the fundamental convictions of this modern school of thinkers. They show differences in detail but are agreed in the general results. The Methodists apply their views to all infants, whether they are children of Christian or non-Christian parents; the Presbyterians confine their statements to the children of believing parents. The first quotation seems to indicate that the author believes that all infants are inherently innocent and wholly unaffected by hereditary sin, and the second plainly states that though fallen in Adam they are all redeemed in Christ, while the third claims regeneration for the children of believing parents. In effect the views are the same: all newborn children (or children of believing parents) are born into the world in Christ, regenerate, in a state of grace, in the kingdom, in the church. Various terms and phrases are used, all meaning substantially the same thing, and upon the basis of this assumption it is claimed that infants are to be baptized. They are as much children of God as believing adults, and are, therefore, to be baptized as repentant and believing adults are to be baptized. The advocates of this view claim

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\*White, *Why Infants are Baptized*, p. 48.

that they have but one baptism for all, that they baptize children and adults for exactly the same reason, that is, because they are children of God. Baptism, it is claimed, is a recognition of that fact.

This reasoning, it must be confessed, gives to infant-baptism a show of rationality and scripturalness that it has never before enjoyed. Manifestly the Scriptures set forth but one baptism, and yet evangelical pedobaptists have always had two baptisms: one based on faith for believing adults, and one for infants based on something else. This view of baptism, if tenable, relieves them of this embarrassment. Again, it bases infant-baptism on the spiritual condition of the infant itself rather than on some fictitious conception of faith, such as the vicarious faith of the parents or the god-parents or the church, or upon a *quasi*-faith of the child itself, or on a faith to be exercised and manifested by the child in the future. Baptism, it is claimed by these brethren, has no relation to faith in any case, but is a ceremonial recognition of the regenerate state and divine sonship of the individual to be baptized, that is, the infant.

This new argument for infant-baptism is thought by its advocates to furnish a firmer basis for their practice than they have ever before had. Evidently they feel relieved, for they attack the old arguments for infant-baptism and expose their absurdities as vigorously as the anti-pedo-

baptists have ever done. Judging from their writings one would be compelled to conclude that they have long felt the inadequacy of the old arguments, and now, feeling themselves more secure on their new basis, they rejoice in demolishing the old fortifications.

But are they so secure as they feel? Will their view of child nature commend itself to the thought and experience of the Christian world? And if their conception of child nature is correct, does that warrant infant-baptism? Several things are to be noted in the consideration of this matter.

In the first place they are reviving a view of child nature that was long ago considered and rejected, a view that is now held by an extremely small minority of the Christian world. This by no means proves their contentions to be false, but it is a consideration which should make thinking men wary in accepting it without the most careful consideration.

In the next place it should be noted that it is based on science and sentiment far more than on Scripture and religious experience. It is not intended by this remark to intimate any want of appreciation of either science or sentiment. The Christian world of the present day owes a great debt of gratitude to science. It has exploded many a hoary and hurtful superstition which had long hampered spiritual progress. Its contributions to a better understanding of the reality

and nature of Christian experience in recent years are gratefully acknowledged. But science has its limitations which scientists do not always recognize. And this writer is disposed to think child nature has been one subject about which there has sometimes been more confident assertion than real knowledge. This is said without any intention of disparaging the great benefit which has accrued to religious workers through the intense study which psychologists have devoted to the child in recent years. No man who aspires to efficiency in Christian work can afford to remain unacquainted with the studies of these scientists. But in declaring the infant to be sinless, science has gone beyond the possibilities of scientific knowledge. There are no instruments or tests by which the taint of sin can be detected. Doubtless the old Catholic theology made assertions concerning the sinfulness of the child that were crude and even gross, but the rejection of these errors need not drive us to the other extreme. It is fair to ask how we are to explain the universality of sin in adults if all children or any children are entirely free from its weakening and polluting effects through heredity? How explain the fact, known to all who have given the matter attention, that earth's saintliest characters have as an invariable rule been most keenly conscious of sin? How is it that of all earth's great and good, Jesus alone shows no sense of sin or unworthiness?



The new Pelagianism must answer these and similar questions before their view of child nature can be accepted, no matter what the students of child psychology may say.

The one passage of Scripture which is relied on most largely—in fact, almost exclusively—is the beautiful saying of Jesus: “Of such is the kingdom of God (heaven),” Matt. 19: 14; Mark 10: 14; Luke 18: 16f. It is argued from this passage that the kingdom of God, here conceived of as the saved, is composed of infants and such as infants, and that therefore infants must be sinless and proper subjects for baptism. This view is apparently favored by the King James Version, but the true meaning is far better expressed by the American Standard Version, which translates the passage, “To such belongeth the kingdom of God.” The “kingdom” does not mean the saved, but a body of spiritual riches represented and embodied in Jesus. These riches are free to all, children as well as others, who will appropriate them. The disciples did not understand this great truth and sought to hinder the children from intruding on the Master’s time and attention. He rebuked them and opened a way for the children, declaring that the kingdom belonged to children also. The Pelagian interpretation of this passage is certainly wrong. Jesus is not passing on the spiritual condition of children, but asserting their right to freedom of access to himself and to the

riches of the kingdom, as they can come. Compare two exactly parallel passages in Matt. 5: 3 and 10.

But it is not intended to consider the nature of the child here at any length. Our interest in the subject is the bearing of this contention on the practice and defense of infant-baptism.

It should be remarked in passing that the arguments for infant-baptism advanced by the new Pelagians are shaky just in so far as their view of child nature is uncertain. If their view of child nature is false, the whole practice of infant-baptism would, according to their contention, fall to the ground, for they reject all other reasons for baptizing infants as wholly untenable.

Several other considerations adverse to this new Pelagianism force themselves on our attention. In the first place, they have, in order to include infant-baptism in their "one baptism," wrenched adult baptism from its biblical relation to faith and declared that a state of grace and not the exercise of faith is the prerequisite of baptism. It was plainly necessary to do something of this kind if they were to hold that there is but "one baptism." Infant-baptism is not a faith-baptism; therefore it became necessary to deny that adult-baptism is a faith-baptism. The older theologians, in order to preserve the semblance of "one baptism," assumed some kind of faith in the infant; these new theologians, in order to preserve "one baptism," have denied faith as

the basis of adult-baptism. An assumed state of grace, identical in newly born infants and in saved adults, is the basis of baptism according to them. It seems hardly necessary to point out that this contention is absolutely without Scripture warrant. The Bible everywhere couples faith with baptism, everywhere makes faith a condition of baptism. The attempt to deny or obscure this fact constitutes an inexcusable perversion of Scripture teaching. It is more objectionable and less justifiable, if possible, than the old assumption of a *quasi*-faith in the infant. The older defenders of infant-baptism departed from Scripture teaching less than these.

In the second place this infant-baptism nullifies faith-baptism just as much as the old infant-baptism did. Many of its advocates frankly admit that it is not found in the New Testament. Dr. Wright says: "The New Testament is silent concerning it," and explains its origin as follows: "The custom of children's baptism probably had its roots in Jewish traditions and practices, and the fear that unbaptized persons would be excluded from the kingdom forever, in harmony with the well-nigh unchallenged phrase, *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*."\* Notwithstanding this silence of the Scriptures this baptism is made to nullify the plain command of Scripture that every believer should be baptized, for no pedo-

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\*Wright, Moral Condition and Development of the Child, pp. 163f.

baptist would think of administering a faith-baptism to a person who had been baptized in infancy. Faith-baptism is just as much destroyed by this as by any other reason for infant-baptism.

In the next place this view of infant-baptism does not differ so widely from the old magical conception of baptism as at first appears. It is true that these brethren reject with the utmost decision all the older conceptions of infant-baptism. In fact, they are as severe as any anti-pedobaptist could possibly be. Dr. Wright admits "that it is little wonder that a custom that has been defended by an appeal to such absurdities and unfounded necessities, by such conflicting arguments and disregard of personal history, should fail of general acceptance and understanding."\* He adds that "there are certain conceptions of infant baptism that appear to us as little better than gross superstition on the one hand, or based on imaginary necessities on the other. They dwell in the region of mystical relations and imaginary benefits. It is impossible to trace the moral benefit to children, in their actual lives."\*\*

Dr. McFarland is even severer on former and present-day Methodist practice than any Baptist would dare to be. He says, "The truth is, we

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\*Wright, *Moral Condition and Development of the Child*, p. 167.

\*\*Wright, *Moral Condition and Development of the Child*, p. 169.

have been grossly inconsistent in our practices. We have baptized our children, and by that act we have declared them to be the children of God and as belonging to the kingdom, and then forthwith we have proceeded to deal with them as if the implications of this baptism were false. Indeed we have not taken seriously our own practice of baptizing children. . . . Either we should abandon the habit of baptizing children, or we should assume frankly the responsibility which such baptism implies.”

Baptists have long recognized something of the inconsistencies and absurdities into which our pedobaptist brethren are wont to fall, and they can but rejoice to observe the growing consciousness of these conditions among the pedobaptists themselves. Baptists can even welcome these Pelagians as colaborers in so far as they assist in unmasking and opposing these weaknesses and other objectionable features of the older pedobaptism. But the objections to this new Pelagianism are no less serious than to the old pedobaptism. It has the appearance of far greater spirituality than the old magical view of infant-baptism, but as a matter of fact the two views which seem to be at the opposite poles of theological thought are separated but by a hair's breadth. It is another case where extremes meet. The Catholic regards the child as sinful at birth, believes the benefits of Christ's death are applied to it by the Holy Spirit in baptism; it is

then believed to be regenerate and henceforth to need only careful training for its eternal safety. The new Pelagian regards the newborn child as sinless by nature, or regenerate and in a state of grace by virtue of Christ's death; for this reason he is to be baptized and for the future needs only to be carefully trained to be secure of eternal life. As in the case of the Catholic child, the whole stupendous transaction took place in the moral unconsciousness of infancy; the recipient will know nothing of the experience except as it is told him in later years. The day after baptism the two children are supposed to be in the same state: both are regarded as regenerate, baptized, in the kingdom, in a state of grace, in the church. The only difference is as to the time of the supposed act of regeneration. It is the difference between tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee. It is supposed that neither will need conversion in the future, both are to be taught that they are children of God and instructed accordingly; any future religious experience must be regarded as only "an awakening" and in no sense an experience necessary to salvation. One child is supposed to have been regenerated in unconsciousness *before* baptism, the other in unconsciousness *in* baptism. Can any one assert that either case is less magical and irrational than the other? Obviously both systems are anti-evangelical, because both reject the idea of conversion as a fruit of the conscious apprehension of Jesus

Christ as Saviour and Lord, both nullify the gospel except for those unfortunates who because of their own perversity or the criminal neglect of those who had the oversight over them have fallen out of the kingdom. It is too soon to learn by actual test of experience what the effect of these views will be on evangelical religion, but there is great reason for fear that it will be seriously hurtful. Salvation by grace through faith is eliminated in ideal if not in fact; repentance and faith lose all relation to justification, become unnecessary and are well-nigh meaningless; conversion, an anachronism. Dr. McFarland says, "Conversion is necessary only to those who have fallen away from God through voluntary sin, . . . We have fallen into the error of regarding certain experiences which come naturally to children in their moral and spiritual development as conversion, when in reality it is only what may be called 'the spiritual awakening' that is a necessary incident to the spiritual life, when that which lies latent and undefined in the mind becomes active and definite." This statement, made by one of the leaders of a great evangelical denomination, would be entirely acceptable to any of the ritualistic churches which believe in sacramental salvation. Even the terminology is borrowed from them. The entire booklet of Dr. McFarland deprecates the idea of the necessity of conversion for those who have been baptized in infancy and properly trained as they grew to maturity.



From the standpoint of the Baptists and even evangelical pedobaptists these views are much more dangerous and objectionable than the older contention of evangelical pedobaptists. For however ambiguous the status of the baptized infant might be among them, it was maintained that it must be converted on coming to years as if it had not been baptized. This inconsistency in the older pedobaptism saved its evangelical truth and made it minister the gospel to all notwithstanding its infant-baptism. This new Pelagianism in its consistency has ceased to be evangelical. If these views are widely accepted, the gradual cooling of evangelical fervor and evangelistic activity among the evangelical pedobaptists may be confidently expected. In seeking to escape the absurdities and inconsistencies of infant-baptism the new Pelagians have fallen into its most serious dangers. No friend of evangelical religion can anticipate the practical results without the gravest concern for the future.

It ought to be said in conclusion, perhaps, that this controversy over the nature of the child in no way affects the Baptist view of baptism. To them baptism is faith-baptism. It is not a means by which parents are to dedicate their children unto God, nor is it a mark of innocence or sinlessness, but a God-given means of public self-dedication. Repentance and faith are presupposed because no soul can dedicate itself unto God without the exercise of these graces.

It ought to be said further that Baptists do not minimize the importance of religious training of children in the home and the church; they believe parents should dedicate their children unto God and train them carefully in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. They feel that they can without immodesty claim that their actions confirm these statements. Their Sunday schools are not behind those of their neighbors either in attendance or efficiency, their ministers are as wide-awake and as progressive as any, their seminaries among the most efficient in training leaders for the religious and moral education of the childhood and the youth of the country, their teacher-training work is well developed and efficient. Nor do they believe that their homes are less the abodes of piety and religious devotion than those of their pedobaptist neighbors; they do not see that any larger part of their children show indifference to religion than of their neighbors. In a word, they believe that infant-baptism on the new Pelagian basis is just as devoid of scriptural warrant, just as futile in its practical effects, just as dangerous to spiritual religion, just as objectionable from every point of view as that which was grounded on the sinfulness of the child. Their practice of faith-baptism enables them to consider with perfect freedom and frankness the spiritual condition of the child. This baptism is the barrier to endless errors and the assurance of the preservation of evangelical faith.

## CHAPTER XIII.

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### FORCES OPERATING IN FAVOR OF FAITH-BAPTISM.

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WHAT are some of the causes of these great changes which the nineteenth century wrought in the standing and prosperity of the anti-pedobaptist movement? Doubtless there is much which cannot be explained, but some forces can be indicated. Among these the tremendous revival in Bible study should be put first. The Reformation rescued the Bible from the neglect and suspicion from which it suffered in the Catholic church, and gave it again to the people in their own language. But its full effects were in part nullified by defects in translation, by the illiteracy of the people, most of whom could not read, and by the fact that the churches used catechisms in the religious instruction of the people rather than the Bible itself. These catechisms presented the peculiar views of the churches which issued them and prevented the Bible from exerting its whole influence upon the people, except as some of them read it for themselves. Even the Protestant churches made no effort to teach the Bible directly and in its entirety to the people. But notwithstanding this serious defect in the religious instruction of the people at the period of the Re-

formation there was, as we have seen above, a tremendous outburst of anti-pedobaptist sentiment which could be quenched only in blood.

Again in the seventeenth century, especially in England, there was a renewed effort to give the Bible to all the people, with a corresponding revival of anti-pedobaptist sentiment. It is a notable fact that English Baptists issued their first Confession of Faith in the year 1611, the year in which the King James Version, the great English vulgate, came from the press. Just in proportion as the use of that book, translated wholly by pedobaptist scholars, spread among the people Baptist sentiment grew.

But it was in the nineteenth century that the glory of biblical scholarship reached its full bloom. Bible lands were explored, Bible customs investigated on the spot, Bible languages studied intensively, biblical manuscripts were discovered and collated, Bible versions revised and new translations made in nearly all the languages of the earth. Human learning and ability have exhausted all their resources in elucidating the Bible text and teachings through commentaries, lives of Christ and the great scriptural characters and in the study of every phase of scriptural teaching.

At the same time the modern Sunday school movement came on, using the Bible as its text-book in the religious education of the people. Beginning with instruction of the small children only, it has gradually enlarged its scope until it

now affects the lives of multitudes through the direct study of the Bible from the cradle to the grave. This has been supplemented by the popular study of the Bible in numerous other ways, such as through the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations, Chautauquas, Institutes, etc. All this has prepared the soil for the spread of anti-pedobaptist sentiments, by presenting positively and directly the Scripture teaching on baptism. Sometimes, no doubt, pedobaptist laymen have been perplexed when they have sought Scripture warrant for the practice of infant-baptism. When they have investigated they have been forced to see that all Scripture baptisms were faith-baptisms. But the most important result has been the gradual melting away of the most baneful effects of infant-baptism in pedobaptist churches in this warm current of Scripture study.

A second force, already hinted at, which has greatly strengthened the anti-pedobaptist movement is the general diffusion of enlightenment. The public school has come, the masses have been made literate, they can read the Bible for themselves, superstitious reverence for the Church and ecclesiastical institutions has been waning. Infant-baptism has flourished where the people took their religious instruction wholly from the Church. Enlightenment and personal independence militate against infant-baptism. It is administered in the ignorance and helplessness of infancy, faith-baptism is possible only where there is intelligence and self-direction.

A third world movement which has greatly weakened the position of infant-baptism is the gradual attainment of political and religious freedom. The practical triumph of infant-baptism in the Middle Ages was largely based on force. The indifference of free men, if not their active opposition, would have prevented the practical universality of the practice. But they were forced to have their children baptized by the anathemas of the Church and the more concrete threats of the State. But the eighteenth century saw the beginning of the establishment of religious freedom. At first in the United States and then gradually in other lands a man was left to determine his religious actions for himself. If he desired to have his child baptized he could do so, but if he objected on religious or other grounds, or if he were merely indifferent, the child went unbaptized. The immediate result has been that the great majority of the children in the United States, notwithstanding all the pressure which the great pedobaptist churches can exert, are growing up unbaptized. They enjoy the privilege of deciding for themselves what their religious status shall be. Very many of them on conversion join pedobaptist churches, but they usually become, because of their own experience, an anti-pedobaptist or non-pedobaptist leaven working in the pedobaptist communion. The practical result is that some of the pedobaptist churches in certain sections of our country have become to all intents and purposes the administrators of faith-

baptisms only. There are sections where the baptism of an infant has not occurred in years, and the entire practice has simply fallen into "inocuous desuetude." This will be more and more the case as religious freedom spreads and deepens. No man who baptizes an infant is in favor of religious freedom in the fullest sense. Proper reverence for personality will inevitably cause the discontinuance of infant-baptism. The *onus probandi*, the burden of proof, rests in our country on the pedobaptist, not on the advocate of faith-baptism. The political, cultural and religious forces of the modern world are fighting against pedobaptism. Pedobaptism is declining in an exact but inverse ratio to the growth of freedom. Faith-baptism is the baptism of freedom, of personal responsibility, of religious experience.

The unparalleled evangelical revival of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has been one of the mightiest factors in the decline of infant-baptism. The essence of the Protestant position is justification by faith. This faith is not the antithesis of "works," in the sense that it was frequently and erroneously preached, but of ecclesiastical "works." Men are justified by faith apart from ecclesiastical ceremonies. This was the paramount contention of Luther and his followers. And yet Luther, as has been shown above, retained baptism as a regenerating sacrament of the Church. Naturally infant-baptism was retained, though it contradicted his central contention. The English Church stood in prac-



tical agreement with him on this point when the work of reform was complete. Other reformers were less sacramental in theory, but still retained infant-baptism, though in its origin, history and primary significance it was distinctly sacramental and anti-evangelical.

Naturally whatever emphasizes the great gospel truth that salvation is the fruit of the repentance and faith of the individual must work to the discrediting of infant-baptism. If the Christian religion is an experience of grace, then infant-baptism is no part of the Christian religion. It was just here that the evangelical revival of the eighteenth century laid its chief emphasis. Everything was subordinate to a personal experience of grace. Assurance of salvation was based, not on the church and sacraments, but on faith and perseverance. By the end of the century this truth was widely operative in England and America. With its spread the Baptist cause sprang into power. The two have continued to flourish together throughout the last century and a quarter. Every local revival has given a new stimulus to anti-pedobaptist sentiment and non-pedobaptist practice even where it has not contributed largely to the growth of the Baptist denomination. Infant-baptism has many supports—the faith of the parents, social custom, the compulsion of the state, the pressure of the church. Faith-baptism rests wholly on the faith and desire of the individual for baptism. Where there is no faith there will be no faith-baptism. Consequently the

success of the Baptist movement is absolutely dependent on the success of evangelical religion which preaches justification by faith, and an evangelical revival is uniformly a revival of anti-pedobaptist sentiment, and of prosperity for the Baptists.

The fifth great movement of the period which has materially influenced the question of infant-baptism is the foreign missionary movement. Everybody recognizes that Christianity was originally a missionary religion, differing in this regard from nearly all the other religions. Its Founder sets as its task the complete conquest of the world. The truths which he revealed were to be presented to the intelligence and consciences of all men who on accepting the position of discipleship were to be baptized and further instructed in the life of the kingdom of heaven. This is the teaching and the only teaching found in the Christian program as set forth in the last charge of Jesus known as the Commission. Each must become a Christian and live the Christian life for himself, irrespective of the nationality or religious status of his parents.

But as time passed and the distinctive character of Christianity became obscured there arose a feeling that a child was in some sense a Christian if his parents were Christians, just as a Jewish child was religiously as well as racially a Jew because his parents were Jews. Men began to speak of Christian families, Christian nations and a Christian society. These conceptions obscured

the missionary character of Christianity. But the original fundamental character of Christianity has been re-emphasized and brought into prominence by the modern missionary movement. Again men and women have gone forth, armed with the gospel, to preach and to baptize those that believe. The baptism of the mission fields is a faith-baptism. This has reacted powerfully at home. Listen to the addresses in a missionary conference, made by Baptists and pedobaptists, and you will find they are all Baptists on missions. All speak of preaching, conversion and baptism. Infant-baptism, which is an absurdity on a mission field, can hardly be entirely appropriate or permanently very important at home. Beyond question the foreign mission movement has exerted considerable influence on the decline of infant-baptism in the home lands.

The extensive study of church history, which has been one of the marked characteristics of theological education in the nineteenth century, has continually exerted considerable influence upon the ministry. It is true that the pedobaptist seminaries as a rule have loyally supported the pedobaptist practices of the churches to which they belong. It is also true that it is never the ministers of religion who break away from the ecclesiastical traditions of the communion to which they belong. Individual ministers do, here and there, emancipate themselves from "the traditions of the elders," but it is to the laity we look to get back to essentials. And yet it must

be exceedingly embarrassing to scholarly young pedobaptist ministers, as they follow the pages of church history, to see the total absence of infant-baptism from the pages of Scripture, to observe the sources from which it sprang in the third and succeeding centuries, to follow its dark and bloody history through the centuries of the Middle Ages and down into modern times. It must be rather difficult for a sincere man who knows church history to defend and administer this ceremony. Of course, not many make any thorough study of church history. This is the most charitable view to take with regard to their actions.

The study of religious psychology is another force operative toward the establishment of faith-baptism. Psychology is the study of the content of consciousness, religious psychology is an account of the content of the religious consciousness. To psychology there is no religion where there is no consciousness of religion. Infant baptism is a psychological absurdity. Religious psychology studies the phenomena of conversion and the other religious experiences, thus lifting them into prominence as the initial and essential elements of religion. Naturally infant-baptism loses its significance for the religious life because it is administered when the child is religiously unconscious. On the other hand, faith-baptism receives a powerful impulse in that it is based upon a religious experience and contributes to the strengthening of the religious content of the soul.

The final reason for the administration of baptism at all is psychological. Jesus Christ knew that man is so constituted as to need some external means by which he can register and express his great religious decision. As the fraternal orders adopt some ceremonies, made as appropriate and expressive as possible, to emphasize the significance of the act of uniting with the order, so baptism is needed by men to mark that great crisis in life when a soul deliberately, solemnly and voluntarily takes its stand with God and his people. The profoundest realities of that experience are expressed by the immersion of the believer in the name of the Trinity. Religious psychology supports faith-baptism while it renders infant-baptism irrational and nugatory.

The fact that anti-pedobaptists have been giving more attention to the religious training of their children and have been making efforts for their conversion at an earlier age than formerly has deprived evangelical pedobaptists of a great part of the strength of their appeal. The children of Baptist parents are as well trained religiously and are converted as early in life as those baptized in infancy. In pedobaptist theory the baptism of infants brings them closer to the spiritual treasures of the kingdom; actually there is no evidence that it has any effect on them whatever. Spiritual riches are just as accessible to Baptist children as to any other, and are as early and earnestly appropriated. The religious character of a child baptized in infancy depends on its train-

ing and its own personal religious experiences precisely as that of a child not baptized. There is no distinction.

The great wave of democracy which has swept over the earth during the last century has contributed materially to the growth of anti-pedobaptist sentiment. If man has reached his majority and is capable of self-direction in all other affairs of life, is he still to be a minor in religion? Must he rely upon the magical effects of a ceremony received in infancy, in the highest affairs of his soul, while life's other great concerns are decided in the full light of his own consciousness and in accordance with the decisions of his own sovereign will? Democracy says, no. The individual must direct his own religious affairs; he must be free.

Finally, the great change which has come over the belief of the Christian world as to the religious status of the infant is working a rapid change in the practice of infant-baptism. It was easy for men, especially for a childless clergy, in the days of Augustine, to believe in the damnation of infants who died unbaptized. Today it is increasingly difficult for even the Catholic churches to keep the people believing such a monstrous doctrine. Even the milder doctrine of a limbo for infants dying unbaptized shocks the faith of many Catholics. We now believe the helpless child is cared for by the loving God and is not dependent on the accident of receiving an ecclesiastical ceremony before its untimely death.

It was perhaps easy for the reformers, battling sternly for life and relying on God for everything, to believe that non-elect infants dying in infancy were lost. When the English Arminian Baptists began in the early seventeenth century to advocate the view that all infants dying in infancy are saved they were regarded as dangerous heretics. Men had been so long schooled in the feeling that the Church has some kind of blessing for the infant, even while it is an infant, that Zwingli and Calvin, notwithstanding their evangelical views, could not break away. They insisted that the child must be baptized and thus brought into the Church, else his parents would neglect him and his God would forget him. He would not be in covenant relation with God. But practical experience has shown that this relation to the Church has no appreciable effect on the child's life. That is dependent on his native characteristics and the environment. Today the world does not believe that a child must be baptized in order to be saved; nor does it believe that it must be baptized to insure the love and care of its parents or the gracious blessing of God. God comes to the child as a child, a human being, not as the child of Christian parents.



## CHAPTER XIV.

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### MODERN PEDOBAPTIST SCHOLARSHIP.

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THE indications are that the Baptist contention concerning the unscriptural character and the ecclesiastical origin of infant-baptism will soon be as completely vindicated and as widely accepted by the scholarly world as their position on the scriptural form or mode of baptism. It is now a common-place of biblical scholarship that baptism was administered solely by immersion in New Testament times, acknowledged alike by the untrammelled scholars of all communions. The same tendency is manifest with regard to infant-baptism. English and German scholars have in recent years frankly acknowledged that there is no warrant for infant-baptism in the way of command or example in the Scriptures, and that it did not appear in Christian history much before the end of the second century. American pedobaptist scholars are timidly beginning to show the same tendency, though they are much more hampered by ecclesiastical ties than their European brethren. It will not be long before all real scholars who are not bound by ecclesiastical traditions or other ties will openly and frankly acknowledge the facts that are so patent to anti- and non-pedobaptists. This does not mean that they will aban-

don infant-baptism, at least not at once ; it means that they will defend the practice on other than scriptural grounds.

A few quotations from some of the leading pedobaptist scholars of the world will serve to indicate the direction of the tide.

The Rev. George Hodges, dean of the Episcopal Theological School, Cambridge, Massachusetts, is one of the ablest and most representative members of his communion. In a recent volume on "The Episcopal Church, Its Faith and Order," he says (page 51) in his discussion of baptism: "The recipients of baptism seem originally to have been persons of mature life. The command, 'Go, teach all nations, and baptize them,' and the two conditions, 'Repent and be baptized,' and 'He that believeth and is baptized,' indicate adults."

This is a brief but succinct statement of the Baptist position, the grounds on which they refuse to practice and actively oppose infant-baptism. But Dean Hodges, notwithstanding the above statement, continues to practice and approve infant-baptism. Let us see on what grounds. He continues: "At the same time, the admission of children into the Jewish church might be taken by the Christians as a precedent for their own use. The baptizing of households by the apostles seems to suggest the inclusion of children. A few statements in very early Christian writings indicate that children were baptized" (page 51). Irenæus, Tertullian, Origen and Cyprian are mentioned, and he proceeds: "The fact, however,

that various eminent Christians of the fourth century were not baptized in infancy suggests that adult baptism was the common rule. Baptism was delayed until it was possible to fulfill the conditions of repentance and faith. . . . The postponement of baptism ceased to be a custom in the church by reason of an understanding of its meaning as a sacrament of regeneration. St. Augustine taught that every infant is born under the curse of original sin, and cannot, without the new birth of baptism, enter into fullness of life. This doctrine which populated hell with infants 'not a span long,' was easily applied by a childless clergy to other people's children. . . . It frightened people into the baptizing of their infant children."

In these words Dean Hodges has stated the facts exactly. He does not claim scriptural warrant, even by clear implication, for infant-baptism; he admits that it first appears at the end of the second century and was finally made general by the theology of Augustine in the fifth century. Anti-pedobaptist scholars claim no more than the substance of these statements. Continuing, he gives the positive grounds on which he supports the practice. He says (page 53): "But the baptizing of children . . . is a true deduction from the meaning of the sacrament. The Christian father was initiated into the Christian society, and the Christian mother was initiated with him, and they were not willing to leave the little boys and girls outside; that is the heart of

it. Some theologians said this, and other theologians said that . . . but parents brought their children, in happy ignorance of the teachings of these relentless logicians, being moved thereto by natural human affection. It is the revelation of the will of God not in a book, nor in a doctrine, but in the heart, which maintains the baptism of infants in the life of the church."

Here is a perfectly frank statement of the secret of the power of infant-baptism. Doubtless most pedobaptists believe the Bible affords warrant for the practice of infant-baptism, but this belief is not the mainspring of their desire for the baptism of their children. This is human affection, misguided as to the religious status of their children and the place of baptism in the work of the kingdom of God. Between the anti-pedobaptists and Dean Hodges there is no controversy as to facts. Fundamentally that difference is as to whether human sentiment, misinformed and misguided as anti-pedobaptists believe, shall override and nullify the clear teaching of Scripture on so important a matter as the recipient of baptism; for that infant-baptism nullifies faith-baptism is indisputable.

The great Cyclopedias usually summarize the views of current scholarship very accurately, and as works of reference they are of great influence.

The treatment of baptism in Vol. II of the "Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics," edited by James Hastings, is in accord with the statements and views expressed above. This is the

latest, largest and certainly one of the ablest works of reference on religious themes ever published in any language. Baptism is treated by Professor J. V. Bartlett, of Mansfield College, Oxford; Professor Kirsopp Lake, of the University of Leyden, and H. G. Wood, lecturer in the University of Cambridge. Professor Bartlett says that adult baptism "alone occupies attention in the New Testament;" but he maintains that the ideas of the religious solidarity of the family then current among both Jews and Gentiles would demand the baptism of infants. He thinks this makes infant-baptism very probable, if not certain. That is, he infers the baptism of infants, not from Scripture, which he admits to be silent regarding it, but from current religious ideas known to exist outside the Christian fold and supposed by him to be operative among Christians.

Professor Lake says flatly, "There is no indication of the baptism of children" in the New Testament, and he finds the presence of the practice first in Tertullian, who opposes it on the ground that it is dangerous to both the child and the sponsors.

Professor Wood is equally clear. He finds the custom first in Tertullian. He thinks it may have appeared earlier, but says: "We are, as Harnack says, 'in complete obscurity as to the Church's adoption of the practice.' The clear third century references to child-baptism interpret it in the light of original sin, and if the adoption of the practice is due to this interpretation, it is almost cer-

tainly a late second century development. . . . References to original sin in Clement of Rome or other writers earlier than Cyprian cannot be held to imply a knowledge of the custom of infant-baptism. Moreover, the idea that infants needed to be baptized for the remission of sins is contrary to all that is known of early Christian feeling toward childhood. . . . Even in the third century infant-baptism cannot be described as a Church custom. That the Church allowed parents to bring their infants to be baptized is obvious; that some teachers and bishops may have encouraged them to do so is probable, though there is no reason to suppose that Tertullian's position was peculiarly his own. But infant-baptism was not at this time enjoined or incorporated in the standing orders of the church . . . . In any case, it is probable that the custom arose from the pressure of parents and not through the direct advocacy of the Church. . . . The whole ritual was designed for adults. The confession of faith in particular points to this; and it must be admitted that the institution of sponsors was a somewhat clumsy device to adapt to infants a ceremony which had clearly been ordered at a time when their baptism was not thought of. . . . The ritual is frankly unsuitable for infants, but it is retained because the tradition that instruction and faith precede baptism is undeniably primitive. . . . Incidentally, the evidence of the ritual is against a very early date for the practice of infant-baptism."

Here is the frank admission by three of the leading pedobaptist scholars of the world, of the facts as they are seen by anti-pedobaptists. This is the position of the greatest religious cyclopaedia in English.

Turning now to the greatest of the German cyclopedias, the "Real Encyklopädie für Protestantische Theologie und Kirche," 3d edition, Vol. 19, page 403, we find this crisp, categorical statement: "The practice of infant-baptism in the apostolic and post-apostolic age cannot be proved. We hear indeed frequently of the baptism of entire households, as in Acts 16: 15, 32f; 18: 8; 1 Cor. 1: 16. But the last passage taken with 1. Cor. 7: 14 is not favorable to the supposition that infant-baptism was customary at that time. For then Paul could not have written 'else were your children unclean.'" On page 408 it is said: "It is proven that this baptism was practiced from the time of Irenæus and Tertullian. However it had not been long practiced and certainly was not much in use at that time." This great work of reference thus takes a position in its statement of the facts concerning infant-baptism in harmony with the contention of anti-pedobaptist scholars.

In the American translation and revision of this great work, known as "The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge," the article on "Infant-baptism" is by Dr. Philip Schaff, revised by his son, Professor D. S. Schaff. They maintain of course the legitimacy



of the practice of infant-baptism, but ground the custom on inference, frankly admitting that "no positive command for baptizing infants is given by Christ or his apostles" and that "no time can be assigned for the beginning of the practice of infant-baptism." As to the first testimony to the existence of the practice they say, "The three earliest witnesses to the prevalence of infant-baptism are Irenæus, Origen and Tertullian," and they admit that the testimony of Irenæus is "not unequivocal." This is the position of the greatest of the American cyclopedias of religious knowledge.

The greatest of all the general cyclopedias, "The Encyclopædia Britannica, eleventh edition," in the article on baptism by Dr. F. C. Conybeare, takes the position of anti-pedobaptists as to the facts, without qualification or evasion. After stating concerning early baptism that "the essential thing was that a man should come to baptism of his own free will," and tracing the history of the rise of infant-baptism, he concludes in these words, which will sufficiently indicate his views: "On such grounds was justified the transition of a baptism which began as a spontaneous act of self-consecration into an *opus operatum*. How long after this it was before infant-baptism became normal inside the Byzantine church we do not know exactly. . . . The change came more quickly in Latin than in Greek Christendom, and very slowly indeed in the Armenian and the Georgian churches."

Church historians are generally agreed that there is no conclusive evidence for the practice of infant-baptism before Irenæus and Tertullian. A few quotations from the ablest of the present-day historians of the world will make this evident.

A. C. McGiffert, professor of Church History in Union Theological Seminary, says in his "History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age," page 543: "Whether infants were baptized in the apostolic age, we have no means of determining. Where the original idea of baptism as a baptism of repentance, or where Paul's profound conception of it as a symbol of the death and resurrection of the believer with Christ prevailed, the practice would not be likely to arise. But where the rite was regarded as a mere sign of one's reception into the Christian circle, it would be possible for the custom to grow up under the influence of the ancient idea of the family as a unit in religion as in all other matters. Before the end of the second century, at any rate, the custom was common, but it did not become universal until a much later time." Professor McGiffert must know that infant-baptism was not "regarded as a mere sign of one's reception into the Christian circle" before the Reformation. It arose, as has been shown, out of a belief in its sacramental regenerative power. Moreover, it is exceedingly doubtful if the "custom was common" before the end of the second century. It was hardly a common custom when it first appears in Christian literature,

and did not become common before the fifth century.

The late Principal Robert Rainy of New College, Edinburgh, was a staunch Presbyterian churchman, but in his "Ancient Catholic Church" he is constrained to admit all the facts as claimed by anti-pedobaptists. In his treatment of the period 98-180 A.D., he says, page 75: "Baptism presupposed some Christian instruction, and was preceded by fasting. It signified the forgiveness of past sins, and was the visible point of departure of the new life under Christian influences and with the inspiration of Christian purposes and aims. Hence, it was the 'seal' which it concerned a man to keep inviolate."

Infant-baptism is not mentioned by him in treating this first period of post-apostolic history. In dealing with the next period (180-313) he says, page 234: "All through the present period, and a good while after, the conspicuous and prevailing type of baptism is baptism of adults. That was so, of course, at the outset, when the Church was busy gathering in her converts; and it still continues to be so. Nevertheless, infant-baptism was recognized already in the second century." He then mentions Irenæus and Tertullian as affording the first evidence of its existence.

Andrè Lagarde, in his "Latin Church in the Middle Ages," carrying the matter one chronological step further than Rainy, says (page 37): "Until the sixth century, infants were baptized only

when they were in danger of death. About this time the practice was introduced of administering baptism even when they were not ill. . . . After the usage came the law. The latter made its appearance in England, where (691) an assembly presided over by King Ina ordered, under penalty of a fine, the baptism of infants within thirty days after their birth. From England the law passed into Frankish countries. In the assembly of Paderborn (785) Charlemagne commanded the Saxons, under penalty of a heavy fine, to have their infants baptized during their first year. . . . Then, as always happens, the law of the highest bid performed its work. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries various provincial councils decided that infants should be baptized during the first days following their birth."

Adolph Harnack, of Berlin, is undoubtedly the most widely known church historian of the world. In his "History of Dogma" he necessarily deals at some length with infant-baptism. Of the post-apostolic era he says (Vol. I, page 20, note 2): "There is no sure trace of infant-baptism in the epoch; personal faith is a necessary condition." Again, in Vol. II, page 142f, he says: "Complete obscurity prevails as to the Church's adoption of the practice of child-baptism, which, though it owes its origin to the idea of this ceremony being indispensable to salvation, is nevertheless a proof that the superstitious view of baptism had increased. In the time of Irenæus (II, 22, 4), and Tertullian (*de bapt.* 18), child-

baptism had already become very general and was founded on Matthew 19: 14. We have no testimony regarding it from earlier times. . . . To all appearances the practice of immediately baptizing the children of Christian families was universally adopted in the Church in the course of the third century." This last statement is decidedly too sweeping as seen from evidence presented above. Harnack himself later modified this statement as seen in Vol. IV, page 284, where he says with much greater approach to accuracy, that infant-baptism "was established in the fifth century as the general usage. Its complete adoption runs parallel with the death of heathenism." He might have added that in its essence it was largely an absorption from heathenism.

H. M. Gwatkin, professor of Ecclesiastical History in Cambridge University, is one of the ablest living historians. He has dealt especially with early church history. In his "Early Church History to 313," Vol. I, page 250, he says of this practice: "We have good evidence that infant-baptism is no direct institution either of the Lord himself or of his apostles. There is no trace of it in the New Testament. Every discussion of the subject presumes persons old enough to have faith and repentance, and no case of baptism is recorded except of such persons, for the whole 'households' mentioned would in that age mean dependents and slaves as naturally as they suggest children to the English reader. . . . It is absurd to quote Mark 10: 14 ('of such is the

kingdom of God') or Acts 2: 39 ('the promise is to you and to your children') to prove that the practice existed." He thinks, however, that infant-baptism is shown by these passages to be in accord with the principles of Christ's ordinance, and declares that "if St. Paul (1 Cor. 7: 14) disapproves the institution, he approves its principle."

Such quotations as these could be multiplied indefinitely. One needs only to compare them with the position of historians a century ago to observe the greatness of the change which recent investigations have brought about in learned opinion.

One of the most striking evidences of the changing convictions of pedobaptist scholars is seen in the treatment by commentators of those passages which were formerly interpreted in support of infant-baptism. Most of the commentators of the present day are simply silent with regard to infant-baptism when they come to consider these passages. Now and then they stop to point out the fact that the passage either has no bearing on the question of infant-baptism or militates against the existence of the practice in New Testament times. A few quotations will serve as examples to show the general trend of comment.

Robertson and Plummer, on 1 Cor. 7: 14, a passage long used as one of the strongest in support of infant-baptism, remark that Paul "is not assuming that a child of Christian parents would be baptized; that would spoil rather than help

his argument, for it would imply that the child was not 'holy' till it was baptized. The verse throws no light on the question of infant-baptism." The "Cambridge Bible" does not mention infant-baptism in treating the verse. It remarks on Acts 16: 15, "We are not justified in concluding from these passages (on household baptism) that infants were baptized. 'Household' might mean slaves and freedwomen." It calls attention to the fact that the members of the jailer's "house" were "willing hearers."



## CHAPTER XV.

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### THE OUTLOOK FOR FAITH-BAPTISM.

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AFTER the survey of the preceding pages it is natural to ask ourselves concerning the outlook for these two baptisms—infant-baptism and faith-baptism—for the future.

It is, then, true that the majority of the nominal Christians of the world still for one reason or another practice infant-baptism. But it is also true that there has been a vast growth of anti-pedobaptist sentiment since the beginning of the nineteenth century. A century and a quarter ago there were perhaps not more than one hundred thousand anti-pedobaptists in the world, and they were nearly confined to England and the United States; now there are from eight to ten millions organized into churches which practice nothing but faith-baptism, and they speak most of the languages of the earth. Then they were unorganized, destitute of culture and unsupplied with schools, poor, despised and without influence; to-day they are well organized, aggressive, well supplied with good schools, with equal opportunities before the law and society in most of the countries of the earth. In some countries like Russia, they are still under suspicion and are sometimes persecuted; nor have they outlived prejudice even

in the most enlightened communities of England and America. The great pedobaptist churches enjoying the prestige of numbers, distinction, wealth and power, often look with disdain, if not contempt, upon the small inconspicuous bands of anti-pedobaptists, who cling to their peculiarities notwithstanding the isolation and opprobrium it entails. Their beliefs and practices have necessarily made them the aggressors in a continuous and extended struggle with the pedobaptist churches. They have earnestly opposed the union between Church and State and thus opposed the supposed interests of the two greatest and most powerful organizations of human society; they have attacked the whole conception of sacramental salvation, thus throwing themselves into the opposition against a view which seems to be a human instinct and certainly is the most widely distributed conception of religion; they have consistently contended for the religious freedom of the individual and religious democracy, a doctrine which has been and still is widely regarded as most dangerous to the stability of society and the welfare of the individual; they have repudiated church authority in every form and insisted on scripturalness as the form of faith and of practice, exciting thereby the charge of being narrow literalists; they have fought infant-baptism as the chief seat and stronghold of the manifold corruptions from which Christianity has suffered. In a word, the circumstances have steadily forced the anti-pedobaptists into the position of an opposition party.

As seen by their opponents they have in some measure been a negative and destructive, rather than a positive constructive force, more bent on the destruction of the existing order of things than on building up the kingdom of God. While this appearance was unavoidable amid the conditions which met the revival and growth of the practice of faith-baptism, still it was very unfortunate. It prevented the pedobaptists from understanding and properly estimating the aims and efforts of the anti-pedobaptists, and it sometimes exercised a baneful influence on the anti-pedobaptists themselves. To be forever in the opposition, members of a despised minority, devoted primarily to destructive criticism of others, is very trying on character. It must be confessed with sorrow that the anti-pedobaptists have not always been able to escape the dangers of their position. They have not always illustrated in their own living those traits of character which Paul sets forth as the fruits of the Spirit, and have sometimes partially lost sight of that great constructive aim, the building of the kingdom of God, which constitutes the ultimate end of all Christian effort.

But notwithstanding their own shortcomings and defects and the misunderstandings and prejudices of their opponents and all the mighty forces of inertia, custom, ecclesiastical and state opposition, the anti-pedobaptists have increased and increased rapidly in all the elements of strength, since the beginning of the nineteenth century.

They now have an assured position which, it seems unlikely, they will ever lose. Indeed, anti-pedobaptism has the best opportunity it has ever enjoyed since pedobaptism was introduced into the Christian church. Anti-pedobaptists are no longer feared as anarchists, dangerous to all social order; the religious fruits of their views have been tested by time and are seen to be beneficent rather than otherwise; they have taken up the constructive attitude more and more as their strength increased and their position became more tolerable, until today they are (at least among English-speaking peoples) bearing a large share in all the world's great moral and religious tasks. The purely negative, critical attitude is passing from among them; they are coming out of their isolation into the central current of the world's life; unjust and unreasoning prejudice is passing away even where approval of their views is withheld.

The most obvious and striking fact is the relative decline of infant-baptism and the rapid growth of faith-baptism during the last century and a quarter. Notwithstanding its long history, its entrenched position in the social life and the ecclesiastical traditions of all the so-called Christian nations, notwithstanding the prestige and power of the great pedobaptist churches, notwithstanding all this, and more, infant-baptism has lost its grip on large elements of society and is declining. Hosts of people who in times past would have been brought into the church through

infant-baptism now stand outside all the churches, while certain forms of Christianity like the Quakers, the Salvation Army and Christian Science have abandoned baptism altogether; the anti-pedobaptists are organized, active and influential not only in opposing infant-baptism but in administering and propagating faith-baptism, while even in the pedobaptist churches themselves there is a large element which does not believe in and will not practice infant-baptism. To insist on it would drive them out of the church. This progressive decline is found among the English-speaking peoples chiefly, exactly where there is the largest measure of human freedom and personal initiative. This decline of infant-baptism has been paralleled by an equally rapid growth in the practice of faith-baptism as an organized movement in the form of churches. Those who practice faith-baptism only now number millions. Naturally only their communicants are counted, but of these there are eight or ten millions. If the population which belongs to them should be included they number twenty to twenty-five millions. This means that something like one in every twenty-five of the nominal Christian population of the world is directly or indirectly supporting faith-baptism as against infant-baptism. Let it be remembered that nearly all of this has been gained in a century and a quarter against the mightiest institutions of human society and the greatness of the success can be appreciated.

Moreover, the forces which have contributed to this growth during this period are still operative, and some of them at least are likely to be accelerated. The effects of the world war will not be fully known for a century or two, but it is likely to contribute to the growth of democracy and personal freedom in the lands of Eastern Europe and Western Asia, and may bring on a great revival of religion. The Slavs of South-eastern Europe have been adopting faith-baptism in large numbers for years, and the establishment of real freedom in these regions would probably prepare the way for a tremendous outburst of Baptist growth. During the last half century there has been good growth of Baptist sentiment among the Teutons and Hungarians. This is likely to be accelerated. Every great upheaval of human society in modern times, which has forced men to consider fundamentals again has witnessed a revival of anti-pedobaptist sentiment. Examples of this effect are the Reformation, when the Anabaptists arose to such great power; the period of the English Revolution, in which the English Baptists made the first deep impression on English life; the American colonial period, in which American Baptists began their work; the intellectual, religious and political upheavals of the eighteenth century, culminating in America in the Revolution and the establishment of constitutional freedom, which was followed in England and America by the era of greatest prosperity for anti-pedobaptists. If this principle



continues to operate, there ought to be a tremendous outburst of anti-pedobaptist sentiment on the continent of Europe at the conclusion of this great war. Surely all social and political institutions are being shaken to their foundations. Men on the battlefields and their suffering friends at home are being thrown back upon the fundamentals of life and death. Ecclesiastical traditions are in the melting pot, men are seeking the spiritual realities which will sustain them in the terrible hours of strife when they look death in the face.

These and other considerations lead anti-pedobaptists to cherish a hopeful expectation of progress for spiritual religion and faith-baptism. They believe the forces that have coöperated to produce the successes of the last century will continue to operate with accelerated power. They confidently expect a further decline and possibly an ultimate disappearance of infant-baptism from the evangelical pedobaptist bodies. Their existence and prosperity in no way rest upon the continuance of the practice of infant-baptism. It is probable, indeed it is almost certain, that their growth would be accelerated by the abandonment of this practice which so many of their members neglect or disapprove.

On the other hand, infant-baptism is essential to the existence of the two great Catholic churches. Its abolition would bring their dissolution. It is certain, therefore, that infant-baptism will continue as long as they exist. Should they



ever become evangelical, which is wholly improbable, it might then be eliminated from them. The continuance and prosperity of evangelical religion is bound up with faith-baptism. Among the unevangelical pedobaptists, infant-baptism is almost as necessary and is not likely to be abandoned.

Advocates of faith-baptism need not be sanguine of a speedy triumph. Ecclesiastical tradition is powerful and belief in the magical effects of baptism is mighty. It required centuries for infant-baptism to establish itself in the Christian church; it will probably require longer to eliminate it. Direct attack upon the custom probably accomplishes little; direct advocacy of faith-baptism as the duty of every regenerated man is a powerful scriptural appeal. Anti-pedobaptists will continue to do both, but they will not become impatient and censorious, believing that God is working in a large way to restore throughout the earth the spiritual salvation and the faith-baptism of the New Testament.

It is a strange thing that "one baptism," which Paul regarded as a bond of Christian union along with "one Lord, one faith . . . one God and Father of all" (Eph. 4: 5), should be one of the main causes of a divided Christendom today. It is safe to say that divergence in the views and practice of baptism divide Christian men and churches more hopelessly and fundamentally than any other expression of religion. If all Christendom could once more be united on scriptural bap-

tism, all other serious differences would disappear, the spirituality and evangelical character of Christianity would be safe and a new era of harmonious action among the Christian forces of the world would be at hand. Infant-baptism more than anything else stands as the chief barrier to Christian union. It is a second baptism, an alien element, introduced into Christianity from the outside, which not only separates its advocates from the rest of the Christian world, but also divides them among themselves. It deprives evangelical pedobaptists of the consciousness of scriptural support, constantly embarrasses them in its defense, weakens the allegiance of many of their members, aligns them with the Catholic churches, introduces an element of artificiality and unreality into religion, and banishes in large measure faith-baptism which was the "one baptism" commanded by our Lord, both their Lord and ours. There is no escaping these facts. Is it too much to hope that evangelical pedobaptists will sometime return to scriptural baptism? Surely the Lord must have known what was best for his children and the work of the kingdom in the matter of the baptism he approved and himself received. If this be so, why will those who love the Lord persist in substituting something else for the baptism he commanded? And by the testimony of their own best scholars they are substituting. Moreover, they are substituting something which is not neutral or negative, but which in its total effects has been and still is one of the most baneful influences in

Christian history. The abandonment of infant-baptism would greatly strengthen all the evangelical pedobaptist churches and would destroy those that are not evangelical, and would be a tremendous step towards the unification of the evangelical forces of Christendom. The advocates of faith-baptism are, as they believe, contending for the essence of Christianity, the essential Protestant principle, which is necessary to the life of all evangelical bodies. They believe that infant-baptism is everywhere unscriptural, that it is, as held by most of its advocates, anti-scriptural, that it has been historically and in practice most hurtful. They know it nullifies, for all who have received it, the command of Christ that every believer should be baptized. They pray the Father to hasten the day when there shall be "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all."





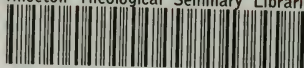
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